

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN."

### BOOK II.

#### CHAPTER XVII. MORE TROUBLES.

In a moment the voices of two gentlemen were heard in the hall. Ada was heard to say softly, "It is William."

"Ross!" cried Mrs. Tilney, impatiently. "What does he want here again? This is getting outrageous."

The next moment that gentleman, in a heavy yellow great-coat, and his tall, stooped friend, Grainger, came tramping in, as if it were a tavern. Mr. Ross, looking weary and jaded, flung himself on a chair.

"There," he said, at last, "we have come a long way, I can tell you—up from the north this morning. Can you get us anything? I promised Grainger, here, something."

Grainger rose up. "Not for the world," he said, in his soft voice. "No, no, I never dreamed of such a thing. My friend romances a little. Of course I shall go down to the hotel."

"Nonsense! What stuff you talk," said Ross. "I tell you, you *must* stay here. Why, we are not such Goths and Siberians that we can't muster a bit of cold meat, or a rib of mutton out of the cupboard—eh? I suppose a famine has not set in since we were here last?"

"Intolerable!" said Mrs. Tilney, angrily; "coming in in this way without notice. This is not one of your common inns or pothouses. I am sure Mr. Grainger knows we should be glad to see him in the regular way; but——"

"Of course," said Grainger; "you understand me perfectly. Our friend here wants, I believe, to talk to Mr. Tilney about business—the business. There is a new turn in the matter, it seems, and——"

"A new turn!" said Mr. and Mrs. Tilney together. "Something unlucky, I am sure of it," added she.

"Well, what of it?" he said; "it's my own affair if it is. That infernal attorney was giving some of his impertinence, and I chose to write him a letter. He has thrown the whole thing up. Curse him, body and soul! I was setting off,

packed up, and was promising myself a week's riot in Paris on my way out, when this infernal ruffian chooses this moment to annoy me."

"O, William! William!" said Ada, "this is more of your old ways!"

"Come away, away down to the hotel," said Grainger. "When we have had something, we can come up again."

"You can do as you like," said the other, "but I shall stay. Look here!" he said, suddenly, standing up. "It comes to this. We want money to carry on with. The appeal, as they call it, comes on in a month. The long-eared judges are to sit all in a row, and hear it all over again. Those low thieving sharks of attorneys won't move a step without some money in hand, 'out-of-pocket costs,' and all their swindling jargon. Now, the long and short is, you are at the top of a bank here, and can draw cheques and make ducks and drakes of the money. You must do this for us—d'ye see?"

"I! God bless my heart, Ross," said Mr. Tilney, "how little you know! Why——"

"I think it would be the best course, Mr. Tilney," said Grainger, calmly. "It was I, in fact, advised it. I know it is done often as a compliment to the director, and very properly too. He gets his turn of a little money now and again, and no questions asked; it is his right, in fact!"

Mr. Tilney looked bewildered. "His right, in fact!" he repeated. "No, no; not in our case. I daren't."

"Daren't!" said Mrs. Tilney, turning on him. "Exactly. What did I always tell you? You never know your own position, and what you are entitled to. You put up with too much from that insolent Smiles. See, even Mr. Grainger must teach you what your rights are."

"No, no," said Mr. Tilney, hopelessly, "it couldn't be—it couldn't be done. We are not on terms. In fact, they have refused."

"Perhaps Mr. Tilney, as Mrs. Tilney says, has been too forbearing with them. These people always *will* encroach. These matters should be calmly but firmly insisted on. What sort of a fellow is he?"

"I tell you what, then," said Ross, rising suddenly, "since *he's* afraid to speak to him, suppose we go to the fellow's house? I'll

bring him to reason, I'll promise. Bullies of that kidney must be bullied themselves; it's the only way."

"No, no," said his friend, "that is *not* the way. You will get into a row. Sit down."

"Well, you can stay, if you like. I shall go up there straight; and see if I don't bring the fellow to reason."

Ada rose up and stopped him at the door, laying her hand gently on his arm. "Don't!" she said. "Why rush into this? It will only be fresh trouble. There are other ways, safer and easier, to be found, which we can talk of."

"I suppose you mean going whining and begging to your banker? *You* will write to him. No, I'll just go, as I said. Come, let me pass, and no melodramatics."

He hurried off. Grainger threw up his hands. "I suppose I had better follow," he said, "to keep him out of mischief?"

Ada looked wistfully after them. "They mistook me. That was not what I meant. Why do you not do," she said, "what I have so often said—take up that little money of mine? It is not worth keeping; and, *indeed*, if it was ten times as much, he and you are heartily welcome. Do, *do* let me ask you again!"

Mr. Tilney, embarrassed, looked into his handkerchief. "No, no, no," he said. "Good child! But better not—far better not!"

Mrs. Tilney was sniffing and moving in her chair. *She* knew all about that money pretty well. "My dear," she said, "you are getting quite heroic. Such devotion and self-sacrifice is quite delightful!"

Neither Ross nor his friend returned that night. The family waited, a little anxiously, until nearly eleven o'clock. "Drinking, I suppose," said Mrs. Tilney, with disgust, "in some of his low haunts. Come to bed, girls. Don't walk so like a horse, Augusta."

But though they sat up very late, no one came that night, and Mr. Tilney went to bed very gloomily, and with genuine sadness, saying it was getting a very blank, dismal life indeed, and that it looked very like as if he were, at his age, to begin the battle of the world all over again.

The next day passed over, and Mr. Tilney, going up to the hotel to inquire, learned that the two gentlemen had gone away by the first train. On this, he rallied, and came home to his family with the news.

"Exactly," said Mrs. Tilney. "Just what I would have thought. Everybody can trade upon our name and influence but ourselves. They have gone off, I suppose, with as much money as they can carry. I declare I admire and respect that fellow, with all his faults! *He'll* get through the world, never fear!"

With a sigh, Mr. Tilney went out, and, though he had latterly been on very cool terms with Mr. Smiles, he went up to the bank to learn something about Ross. But he found that the secretary had gone up to town "on business."

"Very odd!" thought Mr. Tilney. "Ah! every one can go flying up there but me! There were days when I could post up to town, and drive to the palace! All troubles everywhere!"

But troubles were not to be confined to the house of Tilney. It was a gloomy slate-coloured day, and the old cathedral, to which he had so often appealed, looked almost cold and prison-like. As he turned a corner suddenly, he saw running towards him, his white neckcloth half tied, his hair tossed, and his eyes very wild, the figure of Mr. Norbury, the canon.

Mr. Tilney stopped in astonishment, and waited for him to come up. "My God, Norbury, what is all this?"

"Tilney," said the unhappy canon, very incoherently, "I was running down to tell you. What are we to do?—tell me. Poor Jenny and the children——"

"Why, what is it?" said the other. "Good Heaven! what has happened to you?"

"We are done at last, Tilney," said he, taking off his hat, and looking vacantly under the lining. "It is as if some one had been beating me about the head. Yes, Tilney, they have done it. That wicked sneaking Topham has been biding his time, poking and prying, and picking up what he could. We thought he had forgotten it. God forgive him."

"But you don't mean to say, my dear friend, that he has deprived you——"

"—of our bread? Yes. And there's a Christian minister—a Christian dignitary, that'll be a bishop one of these days. God forgive me! I think I could go out now like one of the evicted Irish tenants, and wait for him behind a hedge. I would, and it would be no sin either, Tilney."

"No, no, my poor friend," said Mr. Tilney. "We mustn't think of those sort of things. Something will be done; something will turn up. Your friends will step in; though, indeed," he added, ruefully, "as far as I go myself, I can step in very little. But there is a Providence——"

"O, and Jenny and the children!" said the canon, putting his hand to his eyes, as if he had suddenly awoke. "What is to become of them? Tilney, Tilney, think of that! They will turn them all into the street. I tell you, only yesterday the poor girl, who has more wit than I have, and who has been at me for days, got me to sit down and write that Black Dick a letter that would have astonished you—a thing I felt degraded at doing—putting my very hands under his feet. And this morning comes the answer, turning me out of my little house. He talks of a scandal, does he? Let him take care I don't do something that may scandalise the whole place and country!"

"Hush! hush!" said Mr. Tilney, looking round in great alarm, and pointing with his stick to the cathedral, as if it might betray them. "Don't talk that way, my poor Norbury. It'll do no good. Let us think; let us put our heads together, and we'll soon knock out something; though, indeed——" And he

thought dismally how little he was able at that moment to "knock out" anything for himself.

"What am I to do?" said the other, who was not listening to him. "I can't stay in the house. The children have found it out, somehow, and are crying about the stairs. I have been twice to the deanery. But they won't let me in there. I suppose they think I'd fall on him, and, by the Lord, perhaps they are not far out. Ah, see! There's Miss Ada coming along. Perhaps she'd go up to poor Jenny, and try and keep them quiet."

She was crossing the common, but a wave of Mr. Tilney's stick brought her to them.

"True misfortune has come on us, Miss Ada," said Mr. Norbury. "You can guess, and won't ask me to go into details. Would you mind going up to poor Jenny and the children, and talking to them and soothing them, as you know how to do. We are in a sad way, Heaven knows. But still your sweet voice will do something. It comforts me even now to look at you."

"She will go, my poor friend," said Mr. Tilney, "and be glad to do it."

She did understand perfectly, and the holy light and deep sympathy written in her soft eyes, made her face like one of the soft faces at the corbels of the cathedral.

"Dear Mr. Norbury," she said, "things will turn out better than you expect. The darkest hour is the one before day. Keep up, and hope, and we shall think of something."

"That's just what I was saying," said Mr. Tilney.

But a sort of hope came into the canon's face as he looked after her, which did not come when Mr. Tilney made the remark.

For a long time she sat with the unhappy family, listening to their griefs and lamentations, gave them the same counsel as she had done to the husband, and went away leaving comfort behind her. She got home, ran to her room, and, though usually plain in her dress, dressed herself in her best and most attractive way, with flowers even, and set off softly. The sisters above, in their rooms, with a chaos of dresses all out on the floor, choosing, cutting, tearing, saw her from their windows, and were filled with curiosity.

"What can she be at?" they said, spitefully. "Do you know, I shouldn't be surprised if she was after that young Whitaker. Just what she would do; try her demure sitting-in-the-corner tricks on him. If she does it on the dinner-day, I declare I'll get mamma to pack her out of the room at once."

Ada had no such unholy or ungenerous purpose in her head. She tripped across the Close softly, and made straight for the old substantial high-roofed building, which, within a wall, and watched over by tall gloomy trees (the curacies of innumerable rooks, passing rich on starvation stipends), was the deanery.

#### CHAPTER XVIII. AN ANGEL'S INTERCESSION.

Mrs. RIDLEY had been talking to him the night before about what she called "the Norbury scandal," and expressed her wishes very strongly.

She was to be of the next party to Truncheon, fixed for the following Christmas. "We must really oblige Sir Thomas in some way," she said. "They are so nice to us."

That morning the imperious lawyer doctor had been with him. "My dear dean, it can't be overlooked any longer. It's a crying scandal. I wonder that you yourself, now, a man of piety and all that, don't see it."

"Of course," said the dean, "it is very bad. But my heart bleeds for the poor wretch, who has no real vice in him, you know. Then, Topham, think of the children."

"Well, it's quite for you and the chapter. If you're content, I am. Only I give you fair warning, you may be hauled into a Spiritual Court before you can look about you. To tell you the truth, dean, I am astonished how you can be content to look on and tolerate such things." By working on this view, he gradually brought the dean round, who, with a sigh, said he supposed it must be done, but that it was a hard case for the unfortunate creature.

Mr. Dean, tall, smooth-headed, neatly black placid, was in his study, and at his study-table. The morning papers were about the room, an old room, with long narrow windows that ran to the ground, and were crossed with innumerable small divisions, and through which was a view of a sort of Queen Anne's garden, and of the trees where the curate rooks lived. He had just began a letter to Sir Thomas or Sir William, who was such a friend of his. He had got so far as this:

"Deanery House, Thursday.

"My dear Sir Thomas. Owing to some very gross scandals, which I have hitherto not been able to reach, I have been compelled to require the resignation of one of my canons here. Hitherto he has successfully set me at defiance. But I have just discovered such convincing proofs of his behaviour, that I can delay no longer. When I was last at your house, I was greatly pleased with one of your sons, a youth, as it appeared to me, of exceedingly modest and engaging manners. Let me, my dear Sir Thomas, show my esteem for you, by—"

At this point a servant entered. "A lady, sir, to see you."

"A lady," said the dean, looking up. "Who? What lady?"

"Miss Millwood, I think she said, sir."

The dean waved her off with his pen. ("One of that Tilney set!" was passing through his mind.) "I am engaged—quite impossible."

"She was very pressing, sir, and I think she has some business."

Ada's soft voice was heard behind. "Dear Mr. Dean, if you would spare me five minutes. Forgive me for intruding on you."

The effect of Ada's appearance had wrought upon the servant, and it now wrought upon the dean.

"O, of course, Miss Millwood. Glad to see you. Come in. Sit down. Busy, you see. Letters, letters, letters. One can't be dean and shirk the duties. Well, now," said Mr. Dean,

leaning back with half-closed eyes, and neatly putting his fingers together and taking them away again—"now, what can we do for you? Come."

Then she began. He was in a high-backed, old-fashioned chair, that seemed all made of knobs strung like beads. He was buried in it. The room was gloomy, and it seemed like a Cattermole picture—a Mediæval Bishop about to hear a Confession. The pictures of Past Deans—from Clutterbuck, S. T. P., "Dec hujus Cath. Nat. 1697—ob. 1784," to the dean's predecessor, "Forsyth, S. T. P."—looked down. But as she touched the name of Norbury, the smooth, limpid smile passed from his face, and his fingers came together and parted, and came together again, and his eyes settled obliquely on Clutterbuck, S. T. P. It was hard to resist that penitent. He was a kind, courteous dignitary, and had mixed in good society. But "My dear Sir Thomas" was on the table there before him—a stern reminder.

"My dear child," he said, "it is wholly out of the question. Not to be thought of for a moment. If it were some one, now, in my own employment, say an agent, or something of that sort, we might do something of what you wish. But, alas! I am only a trustee—a trustee here." And his fingers played carelessly with "My dear Sir Thomas." How she pleaded! How she sued, in the most musical of voices and piteous of expressions! How she put forward the hopeless, helpless wife, and the crowd of children, may be conceived. The dean was really a humane man, and was a little distressed at the picture. "What can we do?" he asked, remonstratively. "The man has brought it on himself. The man has long been a scandal to the place—a drinking, billiard-playing fellow. No, indeed, no, Miss Ada; I am a trustee here." (And Sir Thomas, too, had his eye upon him.)

Rarely had she to ask and be refused. But here she was to fail. Suddenly a figure appeared at the many-paned windows—a figure with a large pink face, and large grey moustaches. It tapped musically on the panes, and tried to raise the window.

"God bless me," said the dean, looking round. "Colonel Whitaker come to call on me. I think, Miss Millwood, you may find the ladies upstairs. Very sorry to refuse you." The colonel had got the window open, and had stepped into the room.

"Running away, who's that? Miss Millwood, isn't it? Come back at once."

"You know Miss Millwood?" said the dean, in the same surprise.

"To be sure. I know every pretty girl. (I shouldn't like Mrs. Whitaker to know of that speech. Mum.) Well, and how is Tilney, and all that? He looks a little down, I think." The dean did not know of the acquaintance between the great Colonel Whitaker of the Horse Guards and Miss Millwood.

"And now," said Colonel Whitaker, sitting down, "I should just like to know—to put one question—what is the business on which I find

a pretty young lady closeted in this way with an eminent dignitary of the Church, in the prime of life, and very fair indeed as to his appearance?" The dean smiled and passed his hand fondly down his black stocking, as if *that* part of him was in the prime of life too, and deserved some praise. Something like an inspiration darted into her head.

"Shall I tell, Mr. Dean?" she said, summoning smiles and even coquetry to her aid. "O yes, you must let me, and allow Colonel Whitaker to decide between us. Do. I won't begin without your leave though, Mr. Dean."

"Which he won't refuse," said the colonel. "Let me hear it—let me be judge-advocate. By the way, I hear there is a poor devil of a singing fellow with a wife and a string of children to be drummed out of the garrison?"

"That was it!" said Ada, eagerly. "The very thing, Colonel Whitaker. The dean does not know what to do. Between duty and what he owes to the Church, and sympathy and his own kind heart, I can fancy the struggle. And it is not fair to ask him. But still, Colonel Whitaker, that poor sick woman, and all the little children!"

The dean blushed a little as his eye fell upon "My dear Sir Thomas."

"Come," said Colonel Whitaker; "to be sure! He must do anything that you—or I—ask him. Hallo!"

The door opened softly, and one of the canons put in his head, but withdrew it hastily, and with signs of terror.

"What is this?" said the dean, angrily. "Mr. Dumferline, come back here, sir. What is your business, sir? Who showed you up?"

"It was only in—I came to say—as I thought the matter urgent. But you are engaged," said the alarmed Dumferline.

"What is it? Speak out," said the dean, testily. "As you have said so much——"

"It was only old Dr. Sterne, sir," said the canon. "He was much worse last night; and the doctor said that he could not last *very* long——"

"You are early in the field, Mr. Dumferline," said the dean, sarcastically.

"No, indeed, sir. I was at his bedside, and he said if you could spare him a few minutes later in the day, it would be a comfort and——"

"O, of course," said the dean; "quite so. Later. In a moment. And is that your business? Of course, whatever is usual and proper, will be done. That will do."

Here was a new element. Ada, with the light of the angels from the cathedral in her face, seized on it. "O, then you will at least wait, Mr. Dean"—and her hands went up suppliantly, by a sort of instinct—"a few days only—to see how this may turn out."

"The very thing!" cried the colonel, enthusiastically. "How old is this old canon?"

"Eighty-four or five," said the dean.

"Then there you have the whole programme. Oblige me, as a favour, now. Spare this poor vagabond with the child and wives—I mean, with

the wife and tail of children. You will? I see it in your face."

The dean hesitated. He was a kind-hearted man, and thought with pity of the luckless Norbury and his family. But then there was the truculent Topham, and, worse again, Mrs. Ridley.

"Well," he said, at last, "as you say, there can be no harm in waiting. We must find some way to reconcile both duties. In the words of Holy—I mean of our Shakespeare—'The quality of mercy droppeth like the gentle dew upon the ground.' And so, we will not issue immediate execution against this man, for his wife and children's sake. But you must pray for his speedy reformation, Miss Ada. Yes, you must, indeed."

"God bless you, dean," said the colonel, warmly. "You've a good heart."

In this way was a respite obtained for the Norbury family. What jubilee there was in the small house of the Norburys when this joyful news was brought to them by the golden-haired girl, may be well conceived. Among the children of all ages who fully comprehended what had occurred, it produced a sort of tumult, and wild cries and joyous sounds of all kinds filled the air. The face of Mr. Norbury, who was even now without his coat, was suffused with a silent gratitude, and the pale face of his wife was laid close to his as she whispered: "O, Joe, won't you—won't you take care in future, for all our sakes?"

Mr. Tilney, too, was seriously delighted, for he had been in genuine trouble for his friend. He had gone about mournfully the whole day in lonely places, saying to himself: "Awful! awful! What on earth is to become of them? My! my! my! so it's come to this. What a world!" And in very great distress he wandered about most of the day. When he heard of the reprieve, he was, strange to say, affected with more gloom instead of joy, a feeling which was inflamed by the behaviour of Mrs. Tilney, who improved the occasion as if it were a text, saying, "There! Every one but us! It's long before we'd get through a difficulty of that sort. You're ready enough to help any one else, but not where we're concerned," &c.

But the next morning, just after their breakfast, a letter was brought in to Mr. Tilney.

"I declare, yes," he said, joyfully. "The seal of the bank. I know it. 'Pon my word, yes. It's from Smiles."

"Open it, open it," said she, impatiently.

"O, uncle," said the soft voice, and her hands were clasped together, "I am so afraid."

Mr. Tilney read it to himself with staring eyes, and allowed it to be twitched from him without a protest. It ran:

"Bank, 10 o'clock.

"Sir. The two persons sent by you, as they acknowledge, to try and 'bully' an officer of this society, to try and impudently extort money from him, with threats and intimidation, left me without succeeding in their purpose. I am not

to be intimidated, as perhaps you know already. But I have felt it my duty to proceed at once to town, to lay the matter before the board, who have it now under consideration whether such outrageous behaviour shall be tolerated from one occupying any position in their establishment.

"I am, sir, yours,  
"JOHN SMILES."

"Heaven protect us!" said poor Mr. Tilney, quite aghast. "What will come next? One thing after another."

On his unhappy head Mrs. Tilney spent all the vials of her vexation. It was, indeed, only too favourable an opportunity. What was to become of them all, she would like to know, unless to go out into the streets with her daughters? They were a wretched, miserable family, while "you who should be working for us, like every other man, who isn't ashamed to sit with his hands before him, go about talking absurd platitudes! I knew you'd bring all this on us."

The unhappy Mr. Tilney bore all these attacks without a murmur. When the torrent had spent itself, and Mrs. Tilney had "founced" out of the room, he strode a few paces about dismally enough, looked out of the window, made a faint attempt at whistling, and sank down dismally into a chair. "From one thing to another, one to another," he said. "Well, I suppose an end will come one of these days."

A soft voice was at his ear, a soft breath was on his cheek. The soft voice whispered comfort. "Cheer up, dearest uncle," it said; "all will be well yet. Think of those poor Norburys, how they kept up." And yet this was really practical comfort, and there was truth in this. "He is only angry," she went on, "and does not mean anything serious. You have so many friends, too—"

A light came into his face. "Good child," he said, "you have wonderful sense—wonderful; and I declare I admire you, for the way you managed the dean yesterday. I couldn't have done it. I declare to Heaven I couldn't, though I know enough of the ways of courts and palaces. I know what you mean, Ada. Dear friends, after all, are the mammon of iniquity. My poor head is so confused in these times, I don't know how to think of anything. To be sure, Tillotson will not let him touch us."

"Mr. Tillotson," she repeated. "O no, I did not think of him."

"To be sure, this low bookkeeper of a fellow, to talk to a gentleman born as if he were one of his clerks! A man of my time of life to be brought to his facings by a common creature of this sort! My God, to look to the time when it was 'Tilney, give me your arm'—and a Royal Dook's arm—when my tailor or clerk would run and prostrate themselves before us in the dust. I vow to Heaven, yes; and to think what I am come to now. Yes, dear," he added, with sudden alacrity, "I see the whole plan. You shall write a line to your friend Tillotson. You

were a pet of his. He doesn't care for an old fellow like me."

"I, uncle?" she said, excitedly. "No, no, not to be thought of. I dare not ask him."

"Daren't ask him?" repeated he, surprised. "Ah, coy, I see. I could hardly do it, dear. In fact, it is not so long since I had a—er—communication with him. It wouldn't do, you know."

"O, uncle!" she said, with deep reproach, "surely you have not—"

"One can't help these things, you know. No. Go to your little desk, my dear, and write one of your pretty notes. Tell him, in fact, how we stand altogether; that we are worried, and that the whole thing is getting into confusion. As well tell all, as tell little. Anything from *you* he will attend to."

"That is just the reason, uncle," she said, sadly; then added firmly, "No, it is not to be thought of. If you have already trespassed on Mr. Tillotson's kindness, it is enough; and as for *my* doing anything in the matter, it is wholly out of the question."

"Ah, I see," said he, bitterly. "Very well. You only do what all the world is doing. The Norburys are welcome to what you can do for them; but where poor old battered Tilney is concerned—No matter. I am very sick at heart, and this will do you as well for a beginning as anything else."

She ran to him in a second, and now got his hand in both of hers. "Dear, dear uncle, who have done so much for me, I would do anything for you but this one thing. You see, yourself, it is impossible. If I could tell you everything, you would see how impossible it is. Pity me, but don't ask me."

The poor old courtier looked into her face kindly. "I know it, I know it," he said. "But done so much for you! Dear, dear, don't say that. It is very, very little, and if you knew—"

"If you would let me show what I feel to you, dear uncle," she went on. "Surely there's that wretched little pittance of mine, to whom could it be of such use at this time? Where could it be put to such profit? and if—"

Mr. Tilney gave a sort of groan, and turned towards the window. "My dear child," he said, "that little pittance, as you call it—I have long wanted to tell you—"

With infinite tact and delicacy she saw what was the confession he was about to make. The pang she felt was not of grief after what she had lost, but because she had nothing to offer now. "Or if," she said, "*we* have been obliged to use that little resource already—and indeed it must have gone a very small way—we must devise some other scheme. Cheer up, dear uncle. Only don't—will you?—ask me to do this about Mr. Tillotson? I will tell you the reason one day."

Unspeakingly relieved at this view of what had long been wearily laying on his mind, he could only murmur, "You're an angel of a girl." But still he did not dismiss the notion for de-

liverance that had now suggested itself, and sat down to write a long note to Mr. Tillotson, begging his protection against the machinations of Mr. Smiles. That letter was sent, but it was never read by Mr. Tillotson, who was then almost hopelessly ill, and was never answered.

### ERMINIA.

I HAD met at Puerto Cabello a young Englishman whose appearance interested me. He was only in his twenty-third year, overflowing with spirits and good nature, and so very handsome that it did one good to look at him. He was six feet and one inch high, perfectly well made, and as for his strength, I have seen him lift four hundred-weight with the greatest ease. His hair was dark brown, and curled naturally; he had a pink and white complexion, a slightly aquiline nose, and dark-blue eyes with black eyelashes. The black, brown, and yellow visages of the Creoles made his face look all the handsomer from the contrast; and when one saw him in company with some of the cadaverous natives, it was impossible to help exclaiming, "What a superb fellow!" But Mr. George Hayward—for that was his name—had a weakness for which personal advantages are a very insufficient compensation. He was extremely extravagant, and, consequently, not very scrupulous in settling his liabilities, and had already spent so much money that his friends had been very glad to get him out to South America as a clerk in a commercial house, with the prospect of becoming a junior partner—in time. When I was introduced to him at Puerto Cabello, finding that he had been at Oxford, and that he was an agreeable companion, I inquired no further into his antecedents, but asked him to pay me a visit at Valencia, when I had got a little settled there. He had been some time on the coast, and spoke Spanish fluently; but he had never visited the interior, and was very glad to accept my invitation. After about a fortnight I wrote to remind him of his promise, and he returned me answer that he would come immediately, and begged me to send a fresh horse to meet him at Nágua, as he should ride the whole distance on the night of the 26th of August, so as to be at my house by sunrise.

The day begins early in South America, and although it wanted a quarter to five when I got out of bed to look out for my visitor, there were already signs that Valencia was waking up. The bells of the cathedral and of the convents had been at work for a good hour. A group of Indian and mulatto women were coming up the Calle de la Constitucion, in which I was living. They were going to market, and were making such a merry chattering and clattering that you would have fancied a dozen pair of castanets were in motion besides their jaws. Further off, several parties of women were crossing the street into side-lanes which led down to the river, for this was the time when

modest people went to bathe. The lazy barber opposite my lodgings, cigar in mouth, was just beginning to open his shutters. Suddenly he stretched out his head, as I did, to see who it was whose approach was being heralded by a loud smacking of whips, and a noise of laughter and swearing that broke all at once upon our ears.

"It's Hayward, of course!" I exclaimed; "but what has he got in front of him? It looks as if he were driving before him a mule with a dead man on it!"

In another minute, up came Hayward and his servant, mounted on a couple of horses, driving before them a mule, on which was the baggage; and strapped on the top of it lay the muleteer, a negro, so drunk that even the violent jolting he had gone through had failed to rouse him. Juan undid him in a trice, and pitching him like a log on to some straw that lay in the yard, said, "There let him lie, and if the ants don't sober him before the evening, I'll pay for a first-class surprise ticket—that's all!"

Next, I myself ordered the horses at four P.M., and as I was impatient to show off my handsome visitor, and to see what sort of impression he would make on the Creole beauties, I went to him half an hour before that time, and called out, "Come along, Hayward, and make yourself as great a swell as possible. I am going to present you to some of the prettiest girls in Valencia."

"Oh! there are some pretty girls, then?" said he, looking up from a book he was reading. "I was afraid, from the specimens I saw as I rode up the street, that all the Valencianes were of the colour of the King of Dahomey's body-guard." To this comparison I objected.

The Calle de la Constitucion is one of the central streets that run from the Gran Plaza at Valencia, as straight as a die, on and on, till the houses begin to be interpolated with gardens and orchards, and at last cease altogether, and one finds oneself in the green valley which bounds Valencia to the east. At the opposite or south-western angle of the Plaza there is another long straight street, which runs on till it merges in the road to Náguá. The houses in each of these streets near the square are large and fashionable, and they grow smaller and smaller as one approaches the outskirts of the town. It was not, however, the houses that interested us; for, indeed, nothing can be uglier or less attractive than the outside of a Venezuelan house, with its low one-story-high façade of plain brick. But at this hour every window was open, and in every window sat the ladies of the house, some lovely, all more or less good looking, for the plain and antiquated keep in the background on these occasions. "I always wonder," said I to Hayward, "what becomes of the men at this time of day at Valencia. It may be true, as I have heard said, that there are five women in the place to one man; but still, what becomes of that one? He is nowhere to be seen. Whether it is that the men are riding, or walking, or congregating to smoke, I know not;

but, whatever the reason, the fact remains that the women are left all alone, and can indulge in any amount of flirtation they like. Now mark me; the white Creoles live at this end of the street, near the Plaza; lower down we shall come to the trigueñas, or 'brunettes;' and beyond these we shall find mulattas and mestizas, and we shall finish up with some beauties of a downright black, who are not so much to be despised as you would imagine. Now mind, I am not going, like a Yankee pedlar, to keep my best wares to the last, in the hope of fixing you with a Number Two or Three article. I mean to show you one of the prettiest girls in Valencia straight off at once. You see the large house on the right hand, with the two little maidens seated at the first window? They are the younger sisters. We will ride up and speak to them, and Erminia will be sure to show herself at the next window, with her second sister, Camila, who is almost as handsome as Erminia herself."

With these words I was turning my horse towards the window I had pointed out, when a boy, about ten years old, a brother of the girls, suddenly jumped on to the window-sill, and sat down between them without a particle of clothes on. I was not much surprised, for it is one of the peculiarities of Valencia that the boys, even of the best families, think nothing of stripping themselves and running about in *puris naturalibus*, so that I had often seen a naked urchin leaning out of a window between elegantly dressed women. But, somehow or other, I did not like to choose exactly that moment for introducing my friend, so we rode by, and as we passed, Erminia came to the window, bowed, and smiled. She was just eighteen, a little above the middle height, but looked taller, from her perfect symmetry; a cloud of shining black ringlets fell on her ivory shoulders. Her face was oval, her complexion fair, a little too colourless perhaps, but, in revenge, her lips were red and pouting, and disclosed, when she smiled, teeth of such dazzling whiteness that they seemed to flash like gems; but the most attractive feature of her face was her immense black eyes, fringed with long silky eyelashes.

"I have seen enough," exclaimed Hayward; "I don't want to go a step beyond that house. I don't believe there is such another beauty here or anywhere. If I can but win that girl, I am content."

"On my word," I said, "that's very well for a beginning; but I came out to show you the lionesses, so I must finish my undertaking. Turn your eyes to that next house on the right. Don Fernando, the proprietor, has ten children, and the three eldest girls, grand queen-like beauties, are already married. The fourth daughter, Olympia, the handsomest of all, sits there, as you see. She is magnificent; not so very much shorter than you are yourself, and modelled like a statue. But what is the use of looking?—she is engaged; so come along, I see Felipa Hernandez in that small house on the left. She is a dark brunette, but she is very accomplished, sings charmingly, and is the best

dancer in Valencia. She also teases most agreeably."

So saying, I presented Hayward to the señorita at the window, and being forthwith invited to enter the house, we spent half an hour in chatting and smoking cigarettes. We then mounted, and after talking at one or two other windows, finished our ride by a gallop outside the town. On our return, though it was nearly dark, I introduced Hayward to Erminia, who seemed more than usually shy. A few compliments passed, and we rode home to dinner.

As we sat talking after our meal, I was amused with Hayward's indirect attempts to find out all he could about Erminia, and punished him by giving the most laconic answers possible; but seeing that at last he was getting quite vexed, I told him all I knew about her.

"Her father," I said, "is a man of good family, who has always sympathised with the oligarchical party; consequently his estates, which are large, have been laid waste, and now bring in very little. Erminia's mother is dead. She was the eldest of three daughters, and inherited her father's estate, which has now passed to Erminia, who has, by-the-by, a step-mother in her mother's third sister. By this second marriage there are several children, while Erminia has no full brother or sister. It is an odd thing that Erminia does not marry, for last year she was acknowledged to be the beauty of Valencia, and she has an estate which, if properly cultivated, would bring in six thousand dollars per annum. I believe the fact to be that her mother's second sister, who is in a convent, and is a most bigoted religieuse, wishes Erminia to take the veil and bestow her property on the convent. I am told this good lady has been the means of breaking off more than one engagement into which Erminia had entered, and it is not unlikely that she will be equally successful in putting an end to any future love affair that her niece may have."

Hayward made no reply to this speech, but flung the end of his cigar rather viciously out of the window, and, by way of changing the conversation, asked if Valencia was not famous for its lace manufactory, and where the best specimens could be procured. "To-morrow," I said, "you shall see the place where the finest things are made. It is at the principal ladies' school. I have been there once already, under the guidance of a Spanish gentleman, who will be very glad to accompany us to-morrow. We can also, while we are out, pay a visit to the house of the celebrated General Paez, which I myself have not yet seen. The walls are covered with paintings of his victories. To-morrow, at eleven, we will start."

Accordingly, next day after breakfast we hoisted umbrellas with white covers as a protection against the vertical sun, and crossing the Gran Plaza, found ourselves, after passing a cuadra to the west of it, at the girls' school. A number of the younger pupils were playing in the verandah, which encircled the inner court.

There was a little whispering amongst them, but no noise nor embarrassment; and one came forward very politely and asked us to walk into the drawing-room. Here we found the schoolmistress, a lady about forty years of age, who was still good looking, and who, from her quiet self-possessed manner, seemed to be well fitted to rule in such an establishment. She said she had fifty pupils, and that the elder girls assisted her in teaching the younger, and that was all the aid she had in managing the school. We were shown pieces of French cambric, from which a number of threads had been drawn out, so that they looked to me like the skeletons of pocket-handkerchiefs. We were then shown how the interstices thus made were filled up with needlework, representing fruits, flowers, and other devices. Rosa produced a mouchoir she was finishing, which was declared to be a miracle of art, and worked at it in our presence. The stitches were so wonderfully fine that our eyes ached in attempting to follow the movements of her needle, but the schoolmistress declared that Rosa never made a false stitch. Hayward seemed very eager to possess this handkerchief, and asked the price, and when it could be got ready. He was told it would be finished in two days, and was valued at fifty dollars. On this, rather to my surprise, he produced the money. I, too, made a few purchases, and then took leave, not without a feeling of regret that so many docile, clever girls should have such scanty means of instruction.

We now walked on to the house of General Paez. I was rather annoyed by Hayward's declining to go in. I entered alone, and found I had plunged into the most talkative family I had ever encountered. In spite of the compliments of my host and hostess, who praised my Spanish, and seemed as if they were wishful to talk on for ever, I managed to effect my retreat, and got back to my house thoroughly tired. On entering, I was rather surprised to find that Hayward was not there, and still more so that he did not return till it was time to ride. When he came in, it struck me that something wrong had happened, for his manner was changed, and, instead of his usual good-humoured smile, he had a depressed and moody look. I told him that there was to be a party that night at Señora Ribera's, and that we really must show ourselves, so as to get an invitation. "Besides," I said, "Antonia Ribera is now quite the reigning beauty. I have not yet seen her, but I am told she has dethroned Erminia; and of course you would not like to leave Valencia without seeing her." Finding I was bent on it, Hayward consented to call. "What is the matter with the fellow?" thought I. "Is he going to have an illness, or has he got into some scrape this afternoon, while he was out by himself? I begin to wish I had not asked him to pay me a visit."

The Señora Ribera was a widow, with three daughters and one son. She had been a great belle, and, though her charms had long since faded, she had still the coquettish ways of a spoiled beauty. Her children were all hand-

some, but Antonia was said to be the most beautiful woman in Venezuela. The number of suitors she had refused was endless, and a report had got about that she did not want to marry any one but a foreigner. Some think there is no better cure for a fit of the spleen than a hard gallop, and Hayward seemed to be of that opinion; for I no sooner turned off the high road on to the lake, but he started at a furious pace along a narrow winding path that led across country. In vain I shouted to him to keep a look-out ahead, and to rein in a little. He did not hear me, or would not attend, and the result was just what I expected. At a place where the path twisted a good deal amongst thick bushes, we plumped suddenly on an old fellow riding a stumpy little mule, and, in a moment, Hayward and he came together like two knights in a tournament. Down went the mule, and rolled over and over with the Creole among the bushes, while Hayward's horse made a carambole off the thicket on the other side, and so nearly dismounted Hayward that he lost both stirrups, and, had he not been a good rider, he would certainly have measured his length on the ground. As it was, he kept his seat, and went on for several hundred yards before he could stop his horse. I pulled up directly, and dismounting, went to lift up the fallen rider and catch his mule. The brute made a vicious kick at me, and I fared little better with his master. He was not much hurt, but so enraged that, if his machete had not tumbled out of its sheath when he fell, he would most likely have given me a taste of it. As it was, he struck at my proffered arm, and sputtered out a string of curses, winding up with one which was quite new to me.

"May you die of the fever," said he; "and may your wife go into a convent!"

By this time Hayward, too, had pulled up, and was coming back to join me. His humour was not much improved by the accident, and I was glad to get back to Valencia. We dressed and went to the Señora Ribera's party, arriving very early. Presently, when all the guests had assembled, the door opened, and in came a young lady, who, I saw at a glance, from her extraordinary beauty, must be Antonia. She was very unlike the other Creole ladies I had seen. Her dress and manner were rather those of an aristocratic English beauty than of a Creole. Her eyes were dark blue, her hair a rich brown, her nose Grecian, her eyebrows arched. Only her lips were fuller than is usual with English women. Her figure was slender and graceful, and her step so elastic that she seemed to glide rather than walk into the room.

"Caballero," she asked me, without the slightest preparation, "are you married?"

"Upon my word," thought I, "this is too bad." I looked about for a moment, and saw that all eyes were directed to me. I could not say I was not married, and I did not like to own that I was; so, hoping the answer would be imputed to my imperfect knowledge of Spanish, I replied, "Algunas veces"—sometimes.

People tittered, and Antonia smiled, and gave me a look which seemed to say, "I understand your dilemma."

She then said, "I want to hear about England. I have always wished to go there."

We entered into a long conversation; and the more I listened to that singular girl, the more I wondered. She talked like a bookworm, like a politician, like a diplomatist, like a savant; but so little like a señorita of eighteen years of age, that at times I almost forgot I was speaking to a girl. After a time I remembered that I had brought Hayward on purpose to introduce him to Antonia. So, making an excuse, I got up to look for him. To my annoyance, he was nowhere to be seen, and on asking Madame Ribera about him, she said he had gone away, not feeling well.

I now began to be really apprehensive about Hayward. His behaviour seemed so odd, that I felt sure there was something wrong. However, I could not have left immediately without exciting remarks, so I sat down and talked to a German lady I knew. She began to tell me about the Riberas. "You see Lucia, the elder sister of Antonia?" she said; "would not you believe her to be the gentlest creature in the world? Well, she is anything but what she seems. I suppose you have heard all about her marriage?"

"Not a word," I said.

"Well, then, I will tell you. Lucia had a cousin about her own age, who was as rich as he was ugly. He fell in love with her, and her mother was determined she should have him. You know girls are not allowed to choose husbands for themselves here. If Lopez had been her uncle instead of her cousin, she would have had to marry him all the same, for the sake of his money. She held out a long time. At last, Madame Ribera, and Lucia's brother, and her male relatives met, and fixed everything; and, in spite of her remonstrances, the marriage took place, and Lucia was carried off by Lopez to his country-house, which he had fitted up with new and elegant furniture. But when he had got her there, he could do nothing with her. She behaved like a maniac. She broke the mirrors, and cut to pieces all the beautiful curtains; and the end of it was, that he was obliged to send for her mother, and she was taken home, and insisted on calling herself Lucia Ribera, and would never acknowledge her husband at all. As for poor Lopez, he was so chagrined that he fell ill and died, and now she has been a year a widow; and report says she is to marry Diego Garcia, who has no money, and a worse temper than she has herself; and it is likely he will revenge Lopez, and punish her as she deserves."

I asked about Antonia, but my German friend declared herself quite puzzled about her, and would only say, "She is an enigma."

As soon as I could get an opportunity, I slipped away and went home. Hayward was not there, and did not come in till I was asleep. When I got up next day, I felt so vexed with

him that I determined to leave him to his own devices, and to get rid of him as soon as I could. He talked very little at breakfast, and looked gloomy, but brightened up when a small parcel was brought in to him, containing the handkerchief he had bought at the school. Soon after this he went out, saying he should dine with a friend he had met, who had also invited him to go the other day to his villa, on the borders of the lake. After he had gone out, I could not help saying to my servant Juan that I was afraid there was something the matter with my visitor.

"The matter! yes, sir," said Juan, in a very oracular voice. "It's downright certain there is. If ever I see a man whose place was booked for a passage over Jordan, as my old mother used to call it, it is Mr. Hayward. And then to see him at that house," here Juan jerked his head in the direction of Erminia's residence, a-going on with that gall—"Juan did not finish his sentence, but stalked off, leaving the rest to my imagination.

The following morning Hayward took leave of me, and went to the house of his Spanish friend, which was about twelve miles off. When he had left, as I felt curious to know what had been going on, I resolved to call on Erminia, and see how affairs stood in that quarter. I was surprised to find the shutters half closed. I entered the hall, nevertheless, which in most Venezuelan houses leads to the quadrangle round which the rooms are built, and knocked at the inner door. It was opened by one of the younger girls, who had evidently been crying. "What is the matter?" I asked. "I hope no one is ill."

"Papa is ill," she said; "but you may come in. Mamma or Erminia will speak to you."

So saying, she showed me into the drawing-room, and went to tell them, and I had to wait so long, that I began to think I had been indiscreet in calling. At last Erminia came, with the same little sister who had let me in.

"Papa is very ill," said Erminia; "we have been up all night with him."

She looked so pale and ill as she said this, that I could not help thinking she was more in need of being nursed herself than able to attend to others. After expressing my regret, and inquiring about the illness of Señor L., I said, "My English friend, Mr. Hayward, has left me. I suppose you did not see him before he started?"

Erminia's pale face flushed, and she said with a sort of reluctance "We saw him last evening. He called; that is, he was passing by the window, and he stopped to bid me—mamma I mean—good-bye."

Just then, the Señora L. herself entered the room, and Erminia went to take her place by the bedside of the invalid, so I had no further opportunity of speaking to her that day.

The illness of Señor L. continued without improvement all the time I remained at Valencia. I went daily over to inquire for him, and always saw Erminia, but never alone, except for half a minute on one occasion. I then said, "I want to talk to you about my

English friend." Her face flushed, as it had done before when I mentioned his name, and she said hurriedly, "We shall never be able to speak about that. I am never alone; I am siempre acompañada."

Meantime, I could not help being struck with the love and devotion with which Señor L. was nursed by his family. His daughters, who, when I first came, had every day been seated, radiant with smiles, and beautifully dressed, at the windows, now never left the sick-room. I had the pleasure of seeing, in this instance, that the Creole ladies, who to a superficial observer might appear bent only on coquetry, are in reality not to be surpassed in that affection which binds families together. I had before admired Erminia for her beauty: I now esteemed and respected her for her devotion to her father.

One evening, a few days before the date I had fixed upon for leaving Valencia, and about a fortnight after Hayward had left, I was sitting alone, smoking, when some one on horseback came clattering up to my door, and stopped. Presently Juan entered with a letter. With some difficulty I made out that Hayward was very ill, and that Don Pedro Raynal, at whose house he was stopping, earnestly begged me to come over at once and see him. I immediately ordered my horse, and set out on the twelve miles' ride to Don Pedro's house. My surprise was great, when, on reaching the villa (which we did about midnight), I discovered by the light which was brought to show me up the steps, that my companion was the very same old Creole who had been so rudely dismounted by Hayward, and who turned out to be one of Don Pedro's servants.

"I hope the Señor Inglis is better?" said I, as I sprang up the steps.

Don Pedro shook his head. "You have arrived too late: he is dead."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed, "is it possible? What was his illness?"

"He died, señor, of yellow fever."

After writing to Hayward's friends to tell them of the melancholy termination of his visit to Valencia, I went to sleep, but passed an unquiet night, disturbed by horrid dreams, and was right glad when morning broke and allowed of my return to the city. Two days afterwards I left Valencia, having seen the beautiful Erminia only once more, and then but for a few minutes.

I have since heard, with but little surprise, that her aunt's wish has been gratified, and that she has entered a convent.

#### WARLOCK WOODS.

THE oaks are doom'd in pleasant Warlock Woods,  
Soon they'll come crashing through the hazel  
copses,

Already rocking like poor wind-toss'd ships,

I see their reeling spars and wavering tops.

Shipwreck'd, indeed! The old estate is gone,

The knights have yielded to King Mammon's  
lords,

Rent is the brave escutcheon, sable—gules,  
Shiver'd at last are the Crusaders' swords.

How many an antler'd deer has sought the fern  
Beneath these monarchs of the leafy glade;  
How many cross-bow bolts have struck their stems,  
How many bullets whistled through their shade.

Here have bold outlaws in King Edward's time  
Strung the yew bow, and feather'd arrows red,  
While the fat haunch and wine-jug circled round,  
And near them lay the mighty buck scarce dead.

Yes, here King Harry's black-brow'd myrmidons  
Branded and bound the gipsy's sallow race,  
And here the Jacobite oft knelt in prayer  
For monarch wandering in some desert place.

And here have wounded troopers cowering hid,  
Waiting the well-known voice and pitying eyes,  
And here, with sullen psalms and gloomy prayer,  
The Ironsides have doled their prophecies.

These trees have heard the lover's parting kiss,  
The poacher's curses, and the mourner's sigh,  
The children's prattle—and it is for this  
I hold them bound to man in sympathy.

I pity them. 'Tis hard to die in spring,  
When Nature's heart beats quick with hope and love,

When little lilies chime their bells below,  
And nightingales' rich music thrills above.

Twould be a dismal sight in winter time,  
When great boughs snap, and trunks are tempest cleft,

When dead leaves drift across the rainy skies,  
And not a wayside flower of hope is left:—

How mournful now, when sunshine fills the air,  
And drooping hyacinths grow blue and rank,  
When echoing cuckoos greet the spring again,  
And violets purple every woodside bank.

Bald, bark'd, and bare, the oak tree's giant limbs  
Soon will strew every path of trodden fern;  
Already I can hear the splintering axe,  
And see the woodman's fires that crackling burn.

The old woods pay for many a young heir's faults,  
These giants, centuries long without a fear,  
Fall headlong at one single rattling tap  
Of ivory hammer of brisk auctioneer.

#### TOLD BY A TRAMP.

THIS is a letter from one of the "respectable men" who slept in the Lambeth labour-shed on the same night as the "Amateur Casual." I discovered him by the simple process of advertising in the second column of the Times. We have subsequently had frequent communications with each other, and I spent a very agreeable day with my oddly-found friend not long ago. In reply to my request that he would put on paper some of the experiences he told me, he wrote as follows:

Soon after my decline into vagabondage last summer, I went into Essex; but I will just relate how the journey came to be contemplated. I had been lounging about the Parks for two days, and, as I had not commenced begging then, I was extremely hungry. In the morning, after sleeping on the benches in the Mall, another seedy-looking tramp, who had slept beside me during the night, commenced a conversation on

appearances generally, remarking that he would not have been there, only he couldn't get into a workhouse last night. Then he enumerated a few good workhouses, mentioning Mount-street as especially worthy of patronage; he told me, also, that the food was pretty good. I thought that I would go that evening and see whether I couldn't get in. I had a faint notion that Mount-street was near to Hyde Park, and after leaning on the railings in Rotten Row, watching the "rank and fashion" for some time, I lounged into South Audley-street, and at the corner of a street saw a man with a white smock on, of whom I inquired where Mount-street was? He told me, and, just as I was leaving, said, with a sharp movement of his finger, "Want the big house?" I said that the workhouse was what I wanted. "Ah, well," he said, "just you look here, I wouldn't go there. It's a dirty, starving shop." I wished to know where else I must go, seeing that I was entirely without funds. He asked me if I was hungry, and on my replying in the affirmative, took me into the Albemarle Arms near, and pulled some bread and meat out of an oven in the taproom; he also fetched a pint of beer, and while I was eating told me a little about himself. He was a farrier, but knew a better dodge than hard work. He was always about Grosvenor and Berkeley squares and held horses, opened cabs, and did a little cadging when the opportunity presented itself. The meat I was eating then, had been got from a servant down the street, and was the remains of yesterday's dinner. He said that if I was guided by him I could do a better thing than going to workhouses. I was curious to know what the "better thing" was. All the "pins," as he termed them, would be full of gentlemen's servants about nine o'clock that night, and if I told a good tale I could get plenty of cash. This I couldn't do, I said. Well, I might hold cab-horses, and be sure of a penny. I did hold a few cab-horses, but he was close by and got the pennies, which he never failed to expend at the nearest public-house. At about eight o'clock I proposed that he should see what food he could get from the servant girls he had boasted about as being his friends. The first house we went to in Hill-street made him lose heart. A liveried footman came up the area steps, and in reply to his touch of the hat said, "Didn't I tell you before, that the confectioner's man always came round for the broken meats at six o'clock?" He wouldn't go to any other house, and as I could see he was fast getting drunk, and seeing no possibility of the "better thing" yet, I left him at nine o'clock and went towards the workhouse.

They had two spare bunks at Mount-street, and the porter at the door asked me why such a chap as I wanted lodging? I was tidily dressed, and what on earth could I want there? A pauper took me up to the casual ward, and on the way said, "We allers keeps a bed or two empty, a-chance the Bobbies brings a cove in. We've turned some away to-night, and you're devilish lucky to be taken in."

In the morning, while in the oakum shed, discussions arose as to the best counties for begging, and the merits of workhouses generally. One man, whose appearance I shall not soon forget, dressed in tattered garments, with a jolly round face, was the great umpire on everything. He had been tramping twenty years, he modestly said, and had just come in from a journey by Oxford into South Wales, and gave rapturous accounts of the workhouses there. As he was ill clad, he wanted to know what workhouse in London was good for a tear-up? He said he knew them all; but rules and regulations, perhaps, had altered since last he visited them.

This question gave rise to a long argument, some speakers expressing themselves in favour of one, some of another workhouse. He said, "I don't care so much about the month I'll get, if they only give me tidy togs." One man said he was going to Romford as soon as he got out, and that as much skilly as you liked was given you there. I consented to go with him, as he wanted a companion, and we got to Romford about five o'clock in the afternoon. He was a quiet sort of man, and spoke very little, and did not beg on the road. On the left-hand side, going into the town, stands the relieving officer's house, and a young man came out and gave us two tickets, scratched with a pen. We turned sharply round and up a narrow lane, and at the top sat down for a few minutes. A young woman came past, from work I should think, and my companion asked her what she had got in the basket she was carrying? She had some bread and cheese, the remains of her dinner, and gave us it willingly. The man at the gate would not admit us until six o'clock, and we lay down on the grass by the roadside, in company with several more. A man named Scottie had a dirty-looking woman with him, who was evidently used to such society. Another man, named Dick, of whom I shall have more to say, appeared to be the general friend of these two. The man who took our names at Romford workhouse was an ignorant fellow, and a very slow writer, and some of the casuals gave him extra trouble. I thought I might as well try my hand, and gave him Owen Evans as my name, taking care to pronounce it "Howing Heavens." This produced endless bother, and was only capped by the name of the town I came from, which was Llanfairfechan. He gave this latter word up, and put Barking instead. The casual ward has no bunks, but has a raised board with mattresses, blankets, and counterpanes, dirty enough. It is a very small place, and might hold seven or eight; but they managed to cram double that number in it this night. The man who takes care of this place is an old pauper, who has been at sea all his life. He had some soup and meat to sell at a penny a plateful; but I must confess the humiliating fact, that the whole of the occupants of the ward could not produce that sum, and old Daddy (they are all called Daddies) said, "Well, I niver seed anything like it! Why, last sum-

mer there allers used to be a penny or two in the place; but now! why, I can't get a farthing to scratch my nose with." One gentleman said that unfortunately he had left his money on the pianer in the dorrer-room; another said that he paid the whole of his money away for hincotax; while Dick said that the last time he was in quod he gave his tin to the governor for the Lancashire Distress Fund. All this "chaff" produced much laughter; and everybody went to sleep in the best humour. I should have been a little easier if I had been less crowded. In the morning you turn a crank from seven to eight, and then have breakfast, which is the thinnest of all thin skilly I ever saw. Two pailfuls were brought up among about fifteen or sixteen men, and all swallowed. One man had six or seven pints of it, and I hope he enjoyed it. I took a good share of it myself. After breakfast we did another hour at the crank, and were then free. I had previously been talking with the Dick I have mentioned, and he said he was going to Billericay that night, and to Chelmsford after, with Scottie and the woman, and as he appeared to like me, I said I would go with them. The man I had come with from London was going to Edmonton, he said, and so I left him. Scottie and the woman were going towards Yarmouth, where he had some relations; but this plan was frustrated, as will be seen. We trudged merrily away; Dick the while giving me lots of anecdotes of his life. He had originally been a bricklayer's labourer; but having robbed a man of his watch, he got nine months for it, and had been ever since alternately thieving, cadging, and in prison. He was, even with this degrading character, a kind sort of fellow, full of joke, but couldn't help stealing anything that came in his way.

In the afternoon we got to a place named Orsett, at which place was a workhouse. It was about two o'clock when we got there, and a policeman who had been enjoying a noonday nap in a stable came to us with a very sleepy air, and refused to allow us to stay, giving as a reason that we had plenty of time to get on to Billericay, which was nine miles further. We represented ourselves as footsore, and told many other lies of the same kind, but the policeman knew better, and bade us go on. Did you ever see three real tramps going along a road? If you have, you will have observed that peculiar walk they have, head hung down, and treading as if the road were paved with needles. All tramps walk so. I never saw one who had been any time in the tramping line, walk otherwise. This very afternoon I was painfully conscious of my three companions' vagabond gait and air. People stood and watched us until we were out of sight, and children ran away frightened. Very little talk went on until we had been walking some time, when we all sat down on the trunk of a tree by the roadside, and Scottie then blamed Dick for being in a hurry to get into Orsett, and thus making us do this journey. Scottie grew quite sarcastic,

but Dick took little notice, and was engaged throwing stones at a lot of geese about thirty yards down the road.

We got into Billericay at five o'clock, and went to a policeman for a ticket. This policeman was a long man, and a great bully, and made divers grand efforts to impress us with a sense of his importance; he took our names, height, colour of hair, eyes, &c., and gave us a ticket with as magnificent an air as if he was conferring upon us a pension. Billericay workhouse is a fine building with an imposing gateway. An old porter took our tickets, and having made a memorandum of them, conducted us to the casual ward, which was a small place, and smelt horribly. Some straw on a raised board was the bed, and the covering was a counterpane that might have been white once, but from long service it had grown grey or nearly black. Right opposite the bed, hung against the wall, was a figure of wood. This figure was clothed in carpet, and had the wrong or white side on one arm, one leg, and half the body, and the red or right side on the corresponding parts. It had a notice under it, that any person tearing up clothes in Billericay workhouse would be provided with a suit of the above description, and afterwards taken before a magistrate. The appearance of a person dressed in this way must be highly ludicrous, and I was given to understand by a pauper in the house that it had the desired effect, and that the guardians were rarely troubled by a "tear-up." The figure against the wall was as large as a man, and I remember being rather startled when I awoke in the morning by its appearance. All kinds of names were written on the whitewashed walls; among them a piece of poetry, which began:

And what do you think is Billericay law?  
Why, lying till eleven in the dirty straw.

I forget the rest of it, but remember that it contained about a dozen lines, and that toward the latter end it was very abusive of the master of the workhouse. It was signed, "Bow-street." Scottie assured me that this gentleman's effusions were to be seen in most workhouses in the country, and that he had the honour of the great poet's personal acquaintance. True to the rhyme of "Bow-street," we were kept until eleven, and, what is surprising, had nothing to do but lie in bed. A piece of bread at night, and a similar piece in the morning, was all the food we got.

From the time I left London to when I returned, I never begged; but Scottie and the woman did. Dick did very little begging, either. He told me he didn't come exactly to cadge, but to steal. We went on very poorly in the way of eating, and, except what we got from Scottie and the workhouses, had but little indeed, until after we left Chelmsford. We went along very fast on this morning, which was Sunday, until we came to a brook, where we all washed and wiped our faces as best we could, with the inside lining of our coats; Scottie with the girl's

dress. We got near to Chelmsford in the afternoon, when the three o'clock church bells were ringing. Profiting by the Orsett experience, we stayed a little distance outside it until a more advanced hour. It was at a sharp turn in the road, opposite a stile that led into the town, that we lay down and rolled about for full two hours. Two gentlemen came past, and offered us tracts, repeating a pious sentence that I have heard before and since. We took them. Scottie inquired if the gentlemen had any loose cash to spare? No; but plenty of tracts. At about five o'clock we went down into the town, and made towards the police-station, and got a ticket. The tickets told us that we were vagrants, and would have to do four hours' work for the food and lodgings given us; but it was not done. In going towards the workhouse, right through the town, we of course, on Sunday night, met numerous crowds of well-dressed people, and I have a painful recollection of my humiliation. The people stared hard at us, and I felt it keenly to think I had come to this. This shame got obliterated in a few months, and I could walk in a ragged state through any street with the greatest composure.

The man at the porter's lodge came out remarkably sharp, like a jack-in-the-box, and made a sharp snap at every word we said. When he had taken our names, he shouted to some one else further up the walk, and presently a gentleman was seen standing at a door in the main building, smiling and apparently on good terms with himself and everybody else. We went up to him, and he took our names and descriptions. I told him I was a compositor. "Oh, indeed! and where have you worked last?" "In the Standard office," I said, because it came soonest to my lips. "And pray, what made you tramp about like this?" This being sharpquestioning, I floundered a little, and have but a faint idea what answer I gave. He took it kindly, though, and gave me some private details how a brother of his was in the same trade, and even complimented me by saying, "I was sure, soon as ever I saw you, that you was above the ordinary run of chaps wot come here." He gave us some bread, and called out to a boy (a pauper lad), "Here, Jim, take this gentleman to the ward set apart for—now then, you know—and don't stand gaping there." Jim went along at a slow march, with his chin glancing heavenward, towards the casual ward: which is a moderate-sized place, and similar to Billericay in its bedding.

We were awakened at seven in the morning, when we expected to have to do our four hours' work, but my good-tempered friend let us off, and giving us each a piece of bread, bade us good morning. Scottie and the woman accompanied us as far as the bottom of the road, and then we parted. I may as well mention, that in about a week after this, I saw this girl at one of the workhouse gates in London, disfigured with a black eye, and that she told me, that soon after they had left Chelmsford, Scottie ill treated

her shamefully, and created such a disturbance as to get into prison. He was at that time "doing" a month in the jail at Chelmsford. I never saw Scottie afterwards. Dick and I walked on, that Monday morning, until about eleven o'clock, at a pretty good pace. We then stole some potatoes from a field, and having kindled a fire with some wood by the roadside, roasted or baked them, and Dick begged some salt. After that, we walked on until about two o'clock, when a fellow coming on behind us got into conversation with us.

This man was very young and very simple, and had been doing some labouring work a few miles distant, and was on his way to London. He said he would like to accompany us, as we were going that way. We told him that, not having had much to eat that day, we would be glad if he would pay for a little. He said he had three shillings in his pocket, and didn't mind standing bread and cheese.

At the first inn the man got us the food, and Dick, having called me outside, suggested that we should "nail" the cash. The young man had a small bundle, in which were a shirt and other old rags, and Dick told him confidentially that it would be safer if he tied his money in a corner of this bundle. The young man acquiescing, gave the remainder of it, two shillings and fourpence, to Dick to wrap up. Dick tied the fourpence in a knot of one corner of the handkerchief and kept the two shillings. Having done so, he placed the bundle on the table, saying, "Now it's safe." The man feeling tired, put the bundle under his head as a pillow, and said he would "do a snooze." In a few minutes Dick gave me the signal, and we speedily put half a dozen miles between us and the man we had robbed. I often think about this incident, and what rascals we were. Dick, during the time we walked along the road, told me many incidents of his life. He had been in nearly every jail around and in London, and could tell off on his fingers the pudding and meat days. He was deeply in love with a certain lady in Flowery Dean-street, and of this damsel he was never tired of talking. I asked him, in consideration of his glowing accounts of a thieving life, would he take me as a pupil? He said, "Now, look here, yer a youngster and don't know nothin'. You would be a continual trouble to me if I took you; besides, suppose you got nabbed, wouldn't yer in your cell curse me for ever leading you on? I know yer would. The first time as ever I robbed a cove, which was at Kingston (I come from near there), was of a pinchbeck watch and six bob, and the fellow that led me to do it I have allers cursed and allers shall. You may think, by hearing me talk, that thieving is a easy game, but it ain't. I wish I knew how to get out of it easy."

By dint of hard walking we arrived at Ilford about five o'clock in the evening. This was a little over twenty miles, I understood, and we were both very tired. Under the very walls of Ilford jail we sat down to rest, and Dick called back to memory how he had come out of

that jail from "doing" nine months, and made many affecting observations on old times, and the lenient way in which the "screws" treated him. We got to Stratford at about eight o'clock, and I was nearly exhausted and very footsore. Dick knew a certain lodging-house in a bye-street, and thither we repaired. A woman came out, and called us "Sir" at every other word, and said she was glad to see Dick. After a few moments' talk she called a man, who led us up-stairs into a small room, containing one bed and a single chair. We had twopence when we got up, and with this we bought a small loaf and made quickly into town. In passing through Whitechapel, Dick had to go to a street leading out of Petticoat-lane, and I never saw him afterwards.

### A FREAK ON THE VIOLIN.

SUBSEQUENT to Tubal Cain's inventions; harp and organ—the fiddle, or lyre played on with a bow, takes rank by reason of its antiquity. Its place and importance in the world of Music are of the first interest. The difficulty of handling it, which is extreme, implies the rarest delicacies of ear and of touch—the latter not to be attained to by strenuous good will; supposing apt physical organisation denied. "A hand" on the pianoforte is not a more peculiar possession than "a bow arm." On the precision of finger-positions does purity of tone depend. The human voice has little more expressive power—even with the advantage of verbal declamation to help it—than the Violin. Lastly, the instrument when mute has characteristics which give it a place of its own. Whereas every other one of its comrades is worsened the fiddle is bettered by age and use. A violin has been sold, in our time, for one hundred and forty times the money paid for it when it came from the hands of its maker. A story is told, by Messrs. Sandys and Forster, in their History of the Violin, that for an instrument by Steiner the Tyrolese (who came after the great Cremonese and Brescian makers) fifteen hundred acres of American land were ceded, at a dollar an acre, on which the thriving city of Pittsburg now stands. There is nothing analogous to this in the vicissitudes of price which "the marked catalogue" of sold statues and pictures registers.

The above being all so many indisputable facts, no one need wonder that a body of tradition and anecdote has gathered round the violin family, the same comprising four members:—besides itself, viola, violoncello, and double bass, rich and various in quality. A delightful and amusing book might be written on the subject for the delectation of those "who have music in their souls;" and, since it is unfashionable to confess to contrary organisation in these our times of changes and progress, when Music has become a pleasure, which, like the Plague of Egypt, pervades our kings' chambers and our working men's houses—a freak

on or about the violin family, their makers, their players, and the music prepared for the same, may not be altogether untimely. A compendious and well-executed little book\*—one of the best, as well as most unpretending, book of its kind that I know of—has reminded me of a few old tales and truths, and encouraged me to string together a few of these in a desultory fashion.

How many centuries have passed since the world was first edified by the sounds of a fiddle? is a question for the Dryasdusts;—not to be dismissed lightly here. Old painters—how far inspired by tradition or not, who shall say?—have put it into the hands of Apollo on the hill of Parnassus; and, following their example, the other day, Mr. Leighton, in his *Picture of Music*, put it into the hands of Orpheus as the magical instrument by which Eurydice was given back to life. Certain it is that, about the eleventh or twelfth centuries, the violin had taken its present form, and many antiquarians, the diligent and erudite Mr. William Chappell among the number, are satisfied that this form was of northern rather than southern origin. The Welsh, those dear lovers of pedigree, and who have asserted (it has been humorously said) that the primeval language spoken by Adam and Eve was theirs, have laid claim to it. One of the lozenges in the quaint painted roof of Peterborough cathedral, showing a bare-legged man dancing to his kit (date the twelfth century), has a curiously modern air, so far as the shape of the instrument is concerned; but it was not perfected till the sixteenth century, when Amati of Cremona, and Di Salo of Brescia, gave models which have been slightly varied; which such notable artificers as Stradivarius, Guarnerius, Steiner, and others, but never unmade; nor, indeed, have essentially changed. Since their day, no improvements have been effected, save in the making of the bow—a condition of things without parallel in the fabrication of musical instruments—which has been universally a story of discovery and progress. Think of a Broadwood, or an Erard Concert Grand Pianoforte, as compared with the meek and weak little clarichord, which sufficed to Sebastian Bach; think how the powers of King David's instrument, the harp, have been extended by pedals and "double-action" since the days of the bards, nay, and even of such modern celebrities as Krumpoltz, and Madame de Genlis, and Madame Spohr the first. Think of what has happened to "the German Flute" since Frederick the Great bored his court of wits and philosophers, and the ears of his patient concert-master, Herr Quanz, by playing his three nightly concertos. Think how all the mechanical appliances of the Organ, as the lightening of touch, and the easier combinations of register, have been improved during the past century and a half, since Christian Müller, the maker of the Haarlem organ. Gabelaar, and Silbermann, and Father Schmidt built their instruments, still

magnificent, in respect of their sonority, but comparatively rude in structure. No fate of the kind has befallen the violin. The best workmen are those who best imitate the men who wrought three hundred years ago. In its form, in proportion, in the addition to its means, no improvement has been made; and less so in some points of decoration which assist in the preservation of the instrument. The secret of the old varnishes, which are as essential to the well-being of a violin, as is manipulated clay of delicate quality to the texture of china, seems, if we are to believe common testimony, irrecoverably lost.

Few who see that simple-looking toy, out of which such admirable music is drawn, have an idea of its delicate complexity of structure. A well-made violin contains more than fifty different pieces of woods, the woods being three: maple, red deal, and ebony. The wood must be thoroughly seasoned, especially the red deal; and the only artist of modern times who is said to counterfeit the works of the great Italian makers, M. Vuillaume, of Paris, has done so mainly by a most careful selection of materials. Many a roof and panel from Swiss chalets have found their way into his workshop. Be the grain ever so good, the material must have undergone the slow action of time. Some have thought to supersede this by the use of acids and by artificial heat. But these expedients, I am assured, have only a short-lived success. The violins thus forced deteriorate steadily; whereas the good instruments become more mellow and precious in sound year by year. It seems agreed that the amount of sonority in the violin partly depends on the flatness or otherwise of its form. How it should be that no change of any importance has been made since the days of Di Salo and Amati, presents, I repeat, one of the most singular anomalies in that history of anomalies the lovely art of Music. But the Violin is nothing without its bow; and the perfected bow is an invention dating nearly two centuries later than the perfection of the instrument which it "bids to dis-course." Here is a second anomaly.

A third is, that the instrument was brought to perfection before any music was produced worth performing on it (as we understand matters). Corelli and Searlatti were not writing when Amati, and Stradivarius, and Guarnerius were producing their masterpieces, which sufficed to the Paganinis of modern times for the execution of their stupendous feats of volubility and brilliancy. In truth, till the beginning of the last century, the music written for the violin was mere child's play—the works of one wonderful man excepted—John Sebastian Bach. This great genius, who divined so much, and the value of whose experiments to the world of musical poets has only come to be appreciated within a comparatively recent period, can have encountered no one, I suspect, in the least able to present on the violin his difficult and recondite fancies. His Sonatas, Chaconnes, Variations, as good as buried till Mendelssohn disinterred them, tax a player to the amount which few players,

\* Violins and Violin Makers, &c. &c. By Joseph Pearce, Jun. Longman and Co.

save of the calibre of a Spohr, a Joachim, and a Molique, can afford to be taxed. Perhaps, as a body, the French violinists, as represented by Leclair, inheriting Italian traditions from Lulli, were in advance of their contemporaries of other countries—but so loose is all record of Music at that period, that nothing beyond conjecture is possible.

I have tried, in the above, to touch on a few of the leading points and peculiarities of the leading instrument of the orchestra—the most singular representative of conservative and progressive life in combination that the story of Music, that most capricious among the arts, includes. It would be easy to swell these paragraphs to any extent, by offering characters of what may be called the representative men of the violin, such as Farini, Geminiani, Rode, Viotti, Lafont; but these can be found by any reader who ransacks the dictionaries; so that I shall content myself with rummaging my own peculiar stores of recollection regarding some of the great players of this nineteenth century.

Of course, the first of these to be named is Paganini; but the man whom to name, so as to give any distinct record of the impression made on me by him, is most difficult. There are people of genius who rule by disturbing, not subjugating, the spirits of those who listen to them. One of these (to cite a parallel in music) was Malibran as compared with Pasta; another, the great Genoese violinist, who convulsed Europe by his triumphs, as no instrumentalist (the Abbé Liszt not excepted) has done before or since his apparition.

One may well talk of "apparition" in Paganini's case; because the intense and eccentric personality of the man had its share in the attention his performances excited. A Vampire in an orchestra is not an every-day sight; and never did man by dress and gesture make more of a ghostly aspect than did he, neither more obviously thereby invite the fabrication of the marvellous anecdotes which Fancy makes out of nothing, for Scandal to repeat. Paganini's real life had been miserable and disorderly enough to satisfy such foolish people as think mystery and error inevitable accompaniments of genius. It was a long fever-fit of gambling, and avarice, and self-indulgence; alternating with the exercise of most startling progress in art. With most hearers, owing to the exaggeration of his expression, to which his limitless execution enabled him to give the fullest scope, Paganini passed as being fuller of passion than any instrumentalist who ever appeared. Such is not my own impression. I never could rid myself when I heard him, though I was then inexperienced and liable to be carried away by what is astonishing, of a conviction of the player's eccentricity; which gave a false pathos to his slow movements, and a regulated caprice to his brilliant effects. His execution was limitless; his tone was thin, and chargeable with a certain abuse of trembling vibration, which, for a time, became tiresomely fashionable; but the tone was unimpeachable in purity. His peculiar effects in execution, in stac-

cato and pizzicato passages, in a command of the fourth string so complete as to enable him to turn the violin into a monochord—those glassy harmonic sounds (which, however, when used to excess satiate), are now understood not to have been invented by him, but by Durand or Duranowski, a miscreant belonging to the class of vagabond geniuses, wrecked by their wasteful profligacy, whose number, happily for art, diminishes year by year. Spohr, in his Autobiography, declares that the harmonic effects had been also anticipated by the "once famous Scheller"—another violinist of great talent and disordered life, who was possibly ruined by his connexion with the unclean and profligate Count of Württemberg, and who passed out of sight in want and misery. But though Scheller may have heard Duranowski, it is improbable that the Genoese artist ever crossed Scheller's path. The harmonic feat is not worth much.

It may be added, that from the time when he rose into notoriety, Paganini took small pains to maintain his powers of execution by practice; never, it is said, taking his violin from its case betwixt exhibition and exhibition, and showing small general interest in music; the exception being the munificent present volunteered by this miserly man to M. Berlioz, as the continuer of Beethoven, which has become a historical anecdote.

Paganini's playing of classical music was in no respect remarkable. His great concert pieces composed for himself, though unequal; were excellent in point of grace, fancy, and opportunity for display. He was the original "Carnival of Venice;" and threw into the changes of that insignificant gondola-tune an amount of whim, contrast, and reckless gaiety (costume, almost, one might say), impossible to forget. To sum up, whether his strength was that of health or fever, whether his taste was always unimpeachable or the reverse, whether he was more powerful to surprise than to move, or not—as an executive artist, whose genius left his impress on his generation, Paganini stands unparagoned. For a time, the influence was not a good one. Sham Paganinis appeared by the score, and made concert-music hideous. One or two of these were meant by nature for better things; to give an example, the Norwegian virtuoso, M. Ole Bull, whose peculiarities amounted to a specimen of those close and ingenious parodies of a strange original, which perplex and cause regret in every honest observer. To have justified his choice of style, M. Ole Bull should have carried out Paganini's effects, as Paganini carried out Duranowski's. Only the feat was simply impossible.

At the antipodes to this magnificent curiosity of Genius working out its purposes, not without resource to empiricism, stands in the modern history of the Violin a man whose notable talent almost rose to genius: and whose influence on his art was wider, healthier, and will probably prove longer-lived than that of his Italian contemporary—Louis Spohr. The impetus given by him to the school of German

violin-playing cannot be over-estimated. Of all the players to be mentioned in connexion with the Violin, Spohr takes the highest rank as a composer; in fact, he is the only great violinist who succeeded in opera, in sacred, in symphonic, in chamber, and in solo concert music: and this without any peculiarity in invention or brightness of fancy. Not a single theme by Spohr has become popular. It may not be without interest to speculate how far this may be referable to the character and physical organisation of one of the most respectable, most self-engrossed, most stalwart, most diligent, and least engaging men who has figured in the annals of Music. He was a singular mixture of intelligence and bigoted loyalty to himself, as his Autobiography makes clear. He had something like universality of endowments, for, as a youth, he drew and painted portraits—his own (which is significant), and those of the girls who fell in love with him—and for a while could hardly decide by which of the sister arts he would make his fortune. Having decided, however, for Music, Spohr carried through his purposes in a truly characteristic manner. He stalked along through his life to the end of it, holding his head high, looking neither to the right nor the left; and, though honest, as remarkable for his self-esteem as for his probity. His presence was as striking as Paganini's, though in a style totally different. There was nothing of the charlatan about Spohr. He was of commanding stature, with features noble in form and serious in expression, well befitting the musician, not a bar of whose writings is chargeable with vulgarity, but whose aspect promised a refinement in the man which his social manners did not always fulfil; for to be refined is to be considerate of others, and this Spohr was not. Of all the instrumental players I recollect, he was the most stately to see, and one of the coldest to hear. Of all the mannered composers who ever wrote, (and Spohr was as mannered as the veriest Italian—to name but one, Signor Rossini, whose flimsy writings he so coolly analysed)—he was the least mannered in his playing. Not a point in it was overwrought, not a point was under-finished. "Propriety and tact," as the late George Robins said in one of his advertisements, "presided;" and there was in it such beauty as belongs to perfect order, perfect purity, perfect symmetry, perfect command, over all the legitimate resources of his craft. It was a sincere, complete exhibition—if there was ever such a thing—but one which spoke to the head, not to the heart; to the conscience, and not to the affections. The "sacred fire" was not there. I think that if Spohr had been a thin little man, and without that Jupiter port of his, his playing might have been less successful in Germany, Italy, France, and England, than as in his Autobiography he fondly tells us it was.

But make what we will of Spohr, of his strange indifference, or else false appreciation of other comrades' works—of his deficiency of fundamental knowledge, proved by his taking late in life to re-study counterpoint, when the

task in hand was an Oratorio, there is no doubt that, as a German violinist and composer for the violin, he must always hold a first place. As a professor, he knew (not always a winning or flexible man) how to quicken the intelligence, and not so much to ensure the respect as to gain the affection of his pupils. These could be named by some two score, were a contemporary catalogue the matter in hand; but two may be mentioned—the Brothers Holmes—if only because of the singular indifference of their and our native country to their great accomplishments. Rude as Spohr could be to his Cassel orchestra, calling them "swine" when they displeased him, his pupils, one and all, seem to have attached themselves to him without stint; and many an act of private forbearance and kindness, on his part, to those straitened in their means, is to be set against the impression above recorded.

Then, as to written music for the violin, whereas Paganini's efforts and effects have died out, to be reproduced in a feeble and incomplete echo by his kinsman, Signor Sivori, the violin Concertos of Spohr will not soon be laid aside, owing to the perfect knowledge of the instrument they display, the sensible orchestral combinations they conclude, and the individuality of their manner; which, be it right or wrong, is Spohr's own, and his alone. Further, his violin duets are unsurpassed as combinations of melody, suave, if not new, with harmony pleasing and luscious, if something monotonous. The rage for Spohr's music has subsided everywhere; but his influence, and that of all he wrote for his special instrument, has not subsided; nor, I fancy, may altogether subside,

Till Music shall untune the sky,

and the devices and desires of Herr Wagner shall rule the world.

One of the most delicious artists who ever took Violin in hand was De Beriot, some shortcomings in depth of feeling granted. He may be named as among the exceptions by which rules are proved. That certain qualities are "constant" (as the mathematicians say) in certain countries, I have been long convinced. The vivacious Irish, as a body of musicians, have a propensity to dragging and drawling. The English have small feeling for accent as compared with the French. There has not been one great French contralto singer. The Belgians in music are heavy rather than elegant, and are apt to substitute (as M. Vieuxtemps has shown us on the violin) elaborate pomposity for real feeling and grandeur. But De Beriot, the most elegant of violinists, was a Belgian, born at Louvain. If Paganini pairs off with Liszt, De Beriot does among pianists with Thalberg, and among singers with Madame Cinti-Damoreau. The three may be cited as irreproachable. Greater beauty of tone was never heard than theirs. Greater grace and polish without finality than theirs cannot be attained. Had more of emotion been added by nature, the excellence might have been less equable. None of the three can be called cold; none of the

three ventured one inch deeper than the point their powers enabled them to fathom. In Spohr's Autobiography he speaks grudgingly of De Beriot (as he does of almost every violinist save himself), albeit De Beriot exercised a fascination by his playing which Spohr never commanded; more solid though Spohr's music is. And De Beriot's airs with variations, and Concertos (especially one with the rondo in the Russian style), live in recollection though not heard for many a year, as distinctly as if they had been enjoyed but yesterday. The one man who might have challenged him on his own ground was Mayseder of Vienna (whose lovely and natural and becoming compositions must not pass without a word, when the Violin and its sayings and doings are the theme); but Mayseder was not a show—otherwise a travelling player—and never, I believe, quitted the Austrian capital, and the orchestra of the Kärntner Thor Theatre there. A solo I heard from him in a hackneyed ballet to accompany a dancer on a hot autumn evening to an empty house, was enough of itself to show his sweetness, graciousness, and thorough knowledge of the best uses of the violin.

I come now to speak of a violin player in whom something of the spirits of the North and of the South were combined—the classical grandeur and repose of the one—the impassioned abandonment of the other: who was, nevertheless, in no respect an eclectic artist; neither one on whom, as in De Beriot's case, given qualities could be counted on with certainty—a player who in his best hours, in the best music, had power to move his public as none of the three professors of his instrument mentioned before him were able to do. This was Ernst; who appeared after the three great players commemorated, and who, in spite of one fatal defect, a tendency to false intonation, no more to be controlled than was the same fault in Pasta's singing, could assert himself as among the best of his order, and occasionally, as best among the best. I have never heard a man play worse than he did sometimes. I have never heard any man play so well as I have heard Ernst play: and this not in the form of showy displays, such as any glib or indefatigable person may bring himself to produce, but in the utterance of the intense, yet not over-intense, expression with which he could interpret the greatest thoughts of the greatest poets in music. His leading of Beethoven's three Russian quartets (the Razumouffsky set) may be set beside Madame Viardot's resistless presentment of Gluck's Orpheus, beside Pasta's "Son io" in Medea, beside the "Suivez moi" of Duprez in Guillaume Tell. In all the four instances cited, the case was one of fervent genius—so fervent as to make defects and disadvantages forgotten, but mastered by, not mastering, its possessor. Herr Ernst's tone on the violin had nothing of Spohr's immaculate purity, nothing of De Beriot's winning charm; but it was a tone that spoke, and that spoke, too, to the heart, and representing there the nature of as genial, and affectionate, and noble a man as ever drew breath, or drew a

bow. No matter a disadvantageous education—no matter disadvantageous surroundings—no matter a certain languor of physical temperament which made him too accessible to persuasion—there was in Ernst nothing paltry, nothing jealous, nothing to be explained away, in any artistic transaction of his life. And this, I hold (believing that every man's art will, more or less, express his nature), was to be heard and felt in Ernst's playing. There was sometimes in it a majesty, sometimes an intimate expression, by right of which he deserves to stand alone in the gallery of violinists. The same qualities are represented in his music; "the stars" having destined Ernst to be a great composer, had he been born, like Spohr, with untiring "thews and sinews," or had been as strictly trained as was Spohr. But, he just produced in the way of composition what sufficed for his own needs and remarkable executive powers. One production of his, however, the first movement of a Concerto in C sharp minor, though overlaid with technical difficulties, is full of great thoughts carried out by adequate science. This fragment may well be the despair of smaller folk who attempt the violin. When Ernst played it (on his good days) there was no feeling of difficulty, either in the music or for the player. It should be recorded that Ernst's inequality, to which allusion has been made, in some measure limited his popularity. Those who think that the presence of mind and feeling borne out by great executive power, and a style thoroughly individual, do not still atone for occasional uncertainty, dwelt on Ernst's imperfect intonation, and denied him merit.

No such question has been or can be raised against the reigning King of violinists, Herr Joachim—whose popularity is without one dissenting voice, and whose excellence as a player is without alloy. Avoiding, for the most part, what may be called *trick* music, and, fill now, unsuccessful in his attempts to write that which shall satisfy a mixed audience, he has been driven, beyond any of the artists hitherto named, on the interpretation of other men's compositions. In this occupation he has been equalled by no predecessor. Whether the matter in hand be the wondrous inventions of Sebastian Bach—ancient but not old, and with all their formalities of former times, more romantic and suggestive than most of the ravings of the day, which are set forth as profound and transcendental poetry—whether it be Beethoven's loftiest inspirations (such as the Adagio in his D major trio), or Spohr's Scena Drammatica, or Mendelssohn's lovely Concerto, this magnificent artist leaves nothing to be desired. With a purer taste than Paganini—with more feeling than Spohr—with more earnestness than, and almost as much elegance as, De Beriot—with more certainty than Ernst, Herr Joachim presents a combination of the highest intellectual, poetical, and technical qualities. In the rendering of music he is without a peer.

I must name one more artist, never to be mentioned without respect when the Violin is

in hand. Having illustrated by parallels, I may say that what Moscheles is as composer for the pianoforte, Molique is for the Violin—not always spontaneous, but always interesting by ingenuity and distinct individuality. The concert pieces of Molique will not grow antiquated. They are quainter and less cloying than Spohr's; perhaps less advantageous in displaying the executant, but demanding, in their final movements especially, a certain humour, clear of eccentricity, which gives them a great relish, and is totally unborrowed. In Herr Molique's chamber-music there is more labour and less freedom, but everywhere traces of a sincere and thoughtful musician, which must interest those who value the thorough workmanship of an intelligent head and hand. If it be added that many a charlatan without a tithe of Herr Molique's ideas, or a fiftieth part of his skill in treating the same, has amassed a fortune, whereas his long life, now drawing towards eventide, of honourable toil, extended usefulness, and the respect due to one without a taint, jealousy, littleness, or intrigue, has been ill recompensed, the purpose of such a revelation will be easily divined—not to sadden those who love Art, but to cheer them, by giving them a chance of cheering the latter days of one to whom every sincere student of the Violin and violin-music owes a debt.

#### THE COUNTESS'S LOVER.

"My dear sir, you know nothing about it," said the countess.

I know it is very improper to begin a story in this fashion; but if I were to tell you, reader, how I knew the countess, and especially how the argument which she closed in this peremptory manner began, it would take us both too much time, and leave my story just as it is now; still waiting to be told.

"My dear madam," I replied, mildly.

"No, and ten times no," she interrupted, with her brightest smile; and though she was not young, oh! how bright those smiles of the French countess could be, and how they took one back to the days when those soft dark eyes of hers had made the sunshine of many a foolish heart!

"No," she said, with a little sigh; "love, a sort of love, is common enough, but adoration is rare. To my knowledge, I have been adored but once. You fancy, perhaps, it was when I was presented to Marie Antoinette and was pronounced the beauty of the day; you imagine it was later, when I appeared at the imperial court, in the full maturity of my charms, to use imperial phraseology. My dear sir, nothing of the kind. Look at that picture up there; it is my portrait by Greuze, when I was nine years of age. Well then, about the time that picture was painted I was adored."

"By whom?" I asked, point blank.

She was silent awhile; then she put a question in her turn.

"How do you like that face?" she said. She looked at a portrait by Velasquez. I saw

the fair-haired semblance of a Spaniard in black velvet, with his hand on the hilt of his sword. A pale, mild face this was, yet manly and serene, with great nobleness of expression.

"You do not mean to say that you were adored by that gentleman?" I remarked, rather sceptically.

"Of course not. We were not contemporaries; but I was adored by one singularly like him, and I bought the portrait for his sake. I am fond of pictures."

She need not have told me that. The boudoir in which we sat was full of them. Some she had inherited, some she had purchased; they were all first rate. It was a pleasure to sit with this bright old lady who had been so lovely, and to look at a glorious Claude, taking you to fairyland with a hazy mysterious sunset, or to wander with Watteau's shepherds and shepherdesses in the fairest and coolest of Arcadian landscapes. These two masters were her favourites. I know she was all wrong. I know, too, that if she liked the one she ought to have detested the other; but I am not bound to justify or explain her taste. I simply state it. The countess had a ready tongue, and could find plenty to say for herself on this, and indeed on any subject.

"I like Claude," she told me once, "because I never saw any landscapes like his; and I like Watteau, because he gives me the men and women of my youth in an allegory. I do not care about nature in pictures or in books. It wearies me there, and delights me out of either."

"And you do not much care for figures," I replied. "You have no sacred or historical pictures."

"No; they crowd a room so. I hate to have faces staring at me from the walls."

"And yet you have two, my dear countess—that divine little Greuze and that noble Velasquez."

"That divine little Greuze is your humble servant," she said, with a smile; "and the Velasquez is a very fine one—A Don Juan something or other."

The Greuze was indeed divine. It showed a child's face resting on its pillow, and looking at you with beautiful dark eyes. It showed that, and no more. But what a face! How sweet, how calm, how fair! It was scarcely childish, so strange was its beauty. It was somewhat pale, for it had been taken in sickness; but, I repeat it, it was divine.

"And so you were like that when you were adored by that fine Velasquez?" I now said, wishing to lead her on.

"Yes; a pretty child, as you see," she carelessly replied.

"But, my dear madam, how did you know Velasquez, and how did Velasquez know you?"

"In the first place, his name was not Velasquez, but Pierre; in the second, you will not understand why he adored me, and how I knew it, if I do not tell you a long story."

"My dear countess," I said, confidentially, "you know you want to tell me that story, and you know I am longing to hear it."

"Very true," she replied, laughing frankly; "well, then, here it is. I am slightly lame, as you know. I was born so. The defect was held to be incurable till I was nine; then my parents heard of a man who worked wonderful cures somewhere in Normandy; and, after hesitating a long time, they sent me down to one of my aunts, who resided in the province. You must know, lest you should wonder at some of the particulars in my narrative, that in those days surgical skill was powerless over many an enemy it has since conquered, and you need not be surprised that my parents, who were wealthy and intelligent, acted as they did. My aunt lived in a dingy old town; I would rather not mention its name, even to you. It was a very picturesque and ancient place, with wooden houses that projected over the streets, and seemed to nod at each other in a friendly way. I speak of it as I saw it when I left it for ever; with the sunset rays streaming down its narrow streets, and a strip of blue sky appearing high above the dark roofs and gable ends; but very different was its first aspect to me. We arrived at night; the post-chaise rattled through silent lanes that were black as ink, the postilion wound his horn with a loud unearthly music, and if my father had not been by me I believe I should have fancied we were going straight down to some dark land of enchantment. We drew up on a narrow irregular Place. A bright moon hung in the sky above it, and lit it well. I saw a Gothic church, all carving and niches, with saints' images in them; near it a large stately building, the Palais de Justice, as I was told later; and near that, again, a gloomy stone mansion, with a few red lights burning behind its crimson curtains. This was my aunt's house. My father carried me in—I could not walk—and my aunt—she was my great-aunt in reality—stood at the head of the staircase to receive us. She was a very grave, solemn-looking lady, dressed in stiff silk brocade that spread wide around her. I felt frightened of her the moment I saw her, and that feeling of awe did not leave me whilst I remained beneath her roof. My father commended me to my aunt's care, promised in my name that I would be very, very good and obedient; and as he had an appointment at court, and could not stay with us, he took his leave at once, kissed my aunt's hand, bade me good-bye, and entered the post-chaise, which drove off with a great clatter and rattling of wheels. Again the postilion wound his horn, and again I felt as if the blast had magic in it. I was an enchanted princess, and this gloomy old house was my palace. Truly it proved so; for six months, not till my father came to take me away for ever, did I cross its threshold.

"I do not know that I was a very observant child, but some words which my father had spoken as he was leaving, and which seemed to refer to me, had struck and perplexed me. 'Never alone,' he had said very significantly; and in the same tone my aunt had replied, 'Never alone.' Her manner implied, indeed, that my father's recommendation was a very

unnecessary one; but the event proved its wisdom and also its uselessness.

"I did not like my aunt's house. It was large, cold, and gloomy. I did not like my room, with its lofty ceiling and tomb-like bed, and its three deep windows looking out on the Place, and facing the solemn Gothic church. But I dearly liked my aunt's garden. It was large, and it had tall trees, and marble vases, and white statues, and plashing fountains; and when I think of it, it seems to me that never since have I seen such a fairy place. I dare say there are plenty like it still, but yet I do not know. A garden in the heart of a crowded city is rare, and my aunt's was a green and blooming oasis in the great stone desert around it.

"My aunt's maid Marie carried me down to it the next morning. How I remember the blue sky, the young spring green on the trees, the fragrant flowers, and above all the summer-house to which Marie took me! It was built like a little circular white temple, with a flat roof, and supported by slender columns. It was a temple, I am afraid, and a heathen one; for within it, on a marble pedestal, stood a statue of Cupid bending his bow. I was placed on a couch facing the little god, and Marie said to me:

"Will you be afraid if I leave you?"

"I was not a cowardly child. I said I should not be afraid, and she went, promising to return quickly. I had been reared in a city, taken out for drives in a carriage; but I had never been in a spot like this: truly it was enchantment! Around the temple grew some old acacia trees. I saw their light waving shadow on the sunlit path; their delicious fragrance filled the air; and the grass was white with their fallen blossoms. A little further away I beheld the waters of a fountain glancing in the sun; beyond it, I caught a glimpse of a white statue; and, to make it all more delightful, a blackbird began to sing as bird surely never sang out of a fairy tale."

"My dear countess," I interrupted, "the prince is coming."

"The prince," she said, wistfully. "Ah! well, well. I had scarcely been five minutes alone when Marie came back, with a young man. I need not describe him: this Velasquez was his prototype. His dress, however, was of sober black cloth, very plain, yet deriving elegance from the carriage of the wearer. Child as I was, I could see that. I also saw that this young stranger wore no powdered wig—nothing but his own fair hair. Marie was not an amiable woman. In the shortest and most ungracious speech, she informed me that Monsieur Pierre was very clever; that it was hoped he could cure me; and that for this he must see my lame foot. I made no objection. My foot was laid bare for his inspection; he knelt on the floor to see it better, and after handling and examining it carefully, he sighed and looked up at me.

"Can you bear pain?" he asked, in a voice so sweet and low that it was like music.

"Oh no, no!" I cried, much alarmed.

"Then I cannot cure you," he resumed, "for to cure you I must make you suffer."

"I shed bitter tears; but I wanted to be cured,

to walk and run like other children, and dance like a young lady; so I consented.

"Will mademoiselle forgive me before I begin?" he asked with much humility. He was still kneeling. Our eyes met. My friend, you would never forget that look if you had once seen it. You would never forget the mixture of sorrow and shame and pride which was to be read in those dark grey eyes, so soft and yet so penetrating.

"I forgive you," I cried, very much frightened; 'but ah! do not hurt me, Monsieur Pierre.'

"Alas! he could not help hurting me. My shrieks filled the garden, and when he ceased and I lay on my couch, still quivering with pain, he was pale as death, and thick drops of perspiration stood on his brow. His was a mental agony, keener by far than that which I endured; but I was too childish to know that then.

"Monsieur Pierre is tender hearted," sarcastically said Marie.

"He was leaning against the white wall, his arms were folded, his eyes were downcast. He raised them and gave her a proud, sorrowful, reproachful look; but all he answered was, 'I am tender hearted, mademoiselle.'

"Marie tightened her lips, and was mute. And now he knelt again on the floor by me, for he had to bind up my foot. He could not avoid hurting me a little as he did so, but every time I moaned with pain he looked at me so pitifully that I could not help forgiving him. I told him so after my own fashion.

"I like you all the same, Monsieur Pierre," I said.

"He looked at me with an odd sort of wonder, as if I spoke a language he did not understand; then he smiled very sweetly.

"Have you done?" harshly asked Marie.

"He mildly and gravely answered that he had, and he left the summer-house.

"Good-bye, Monsieur Pierre," I cried after him, but he did not answer me. Marie went with him. When she came back, I asked why she had left me again. She shortly replied that she had let Monsieur Pierre out by the garden door, for that his way home lay along a lane that ran at the back of my aunt's mansion. The business of the day was now over, and I was carried in to my gloomy room, where I amused myself as well as I could with a few toys and Marie's society.

"I thought I had done with Monsieur Pierre; but when at the end of a week Marie carried me down to the summer-house, I trembled with terror. The morning was lovely, the garden was more beautiful than ever; but the dread of pain was on me, and conquered every other feeling. Marie again left me alone, and again came back with Monsieur Pierre. I screamed when I saw him, and hid my face in my hands.

"Oh! you are going to hurt me—to hurt me," I cried, 'Oh! do not, Monsieur Pierre.'

"I shall not hurt you so much this time," answered his sad low voice.

"What need you tell mademoiselle that you shall hurt her at all?" angrily exclaimed Marie.

"I cannot lie," he said gently; 'but I shall not hurt her very much.'

"I withdrew my hands and looked at him. The tender pity in his face almost drove away my fears. He had said that he would not hurt me very much, and I believed him. He knelt down by me, and asked humbly if he might begin. I shook with terror, but I said Yes. He hurt me more than I had expected—more than he had expected himself, and I was angry.

"You are bad, you are cruel," I sobbed, when he had done, 'and I hate you.'

"He was still kneeling by me, tying up my poor wounded foot. I felt his hands tremble, and I saw his lips quiver.

"No, I do not hate you," I cried, remorsefully. 'I like you, Monsieur Pierre.'

"Hold your tongue," sharply said Marie.

"This settled the matter. I vowed that I loved Monsieur Pierre, who was trying to cure me. Marie was very angry; but Monsieur Pierre, who was silently tying up my foot, stooped a little as if to secure the bandage better, and in so doing touched with his lips the poor limb he had been torturing. Marie saw and guessed nothing, and you may be sure I did not tell her of the liberty my kind doctor had taken. She let him out again by the garden door, and again he left without bidding me good-bye. He came several times; each time he hurt me less than the last. His attendance upon me always took place in the summer-house in Marie's presence. It seemed that he could not enter the house; for I was once a whole fortnight without seeing him, on account of the constant rain we had then. And now, my friend, I come to the point of my story. That young man loved me. He loved me—not as I have been loved since those far days; but with a worship, an adoration, a fervent respect, no woman has a right to expect, and which no woman in a thousand, no, nor in ten thousand, ever receives. Do not tell me that a young man of his years could not love a child of mine. Love is not always born of hope. There is a love so pure that it can live on its own flame and wish for no more. This is the love before the fall, if I may venture to call it so—the love which needs not beauty to call it forth, which has no visions of wedded bliss, which is independent of age or time. Yet it is a love which, spite its perfect innocence, is wholly distinct from friendship, since it can only be felt by man for woman, or by woman for man. I was but a child to others—a pretty one, I believe, but still a child; but I was womanhood to Monsieur Pierre—and womanhood in all its dignity, I have no doubt. Memory has since told me a story I was then too young to read. I now understand the language of his reverent looks, and I can guess the meaning of his silent admiration. That he was my slave I saw even then; that I could have made him do anything I pleased, that he suffered agonies when he was obliged to hurt me, I also knew. Power is sweet, and I should have dearly liked to rule my new subject; but Marie would not allow it. When I spoke to him, she would not let him answer me; when I asked him to gather me a

flower, or help to lift me, or to render me any trifling service, she forestalled him. And he allowed her to do it, with the grave and resigned air of a man who is powerless in the hands of a cruel fate. So the summer passed, and I was almost well when my aunt fell ill. Marie was too much engaged with her mistress to attend to me. She gave me up to the care of her niece Louise; a good-natured and faithful, but very foolish handmaiden.

"The first time that Louise took me down to the summer-house, in order that Monsieur Pierre might attend upon me as usual, I discovered that she was by no means so strict as her aunt. I spoke to Monsieur Pierre, and she did not prevent him from answering, which he did briefly enough. I asked him to help me to sit up on my couch, and Louise took it as a matter of course that he should comply. Monsieur Pierre propped me up with a pillow, as I had asked, and if it had been a divinity who had required such an office from him, he could not have performed it with deeper respect. The next time he came, he was a little more familiar, and the third time—we were alone for the first and last time—Louise had dropped her work in the garden, and had gone to look for it while Monsieur Pierre was tying up my foot. She found the gardener on her way, and forgetting all about me, I suppose, stayed and chatted with him. Monsieur Pierre went on with his office and never looked at me; but I was not a shy child, and I was bent on improving the opportunity.

"Monsieur Pierre, shall I soon be well?" I asked.

"Very soon, I hope."

"And do you think I shall really be able to dance? I mean, like my elder sister, and wear a white dress and flowers?" He looked up at me. I tell you I was not a child in his eyes. I have no doubt he saw me then as my fancy had pictured myself—a maiden attired in white, with flowers in my hair.

"You will look like an angel," he murmured. Poor fellow! he must have been very far gone indeed if he could think such a little mischievous monkey as I could be like an angel. I was charmed with the compliment, however, and, as I was really grateful to him besides, I exclaimed in the ardour of my thankfulness:

"Monsieur Pierre, what shall I give you for having cured me?"

"He shook his head. He had been paid for his trouble; he wanted nothing. Now, lest you should wonder at what follows, allow me to tell you that I had been reading a story in which the heroine, a duke's daughter, having been saved from certain death by a peasant's son, embraced him in the presence of the whole ducal court. I had thought this act of condescension very charming, and, conceiving the distance between Monsieur Pierre and myself to be fully as great as that between the young peasant and the duke's daughter, I said magnanimously:

"Monsieur Pierre, I will embrace you." He was still kneeling by me, and I half sat up, reclining against a heap of pillows. There was

scarcely any distance between us; I had only to stoop a little to kiss his cheek, but my lips never touched it. He looked at me for a moment, as if I had been an angel indeed coming down from heaven with a divine message of love; then he started to his feet, and exclaimed:

"Kiss me? I would die rather than let you."

"This was so unlike my story, in which the peasant's son fainted with joy at the honour conferred upon him, that I was cut to the heart. Nothing, moreover, could be more offensive than Monsieur Pierre's manner, as he stood leaning against the wall of the summer-house, his brows knit, his face stern and scornful, and his arms folded across his breast, looking much as I had seen him look on that day when Marie had taxed him with being tender hearted. I was vexed and angry, and in my mortification I cried:

"You are very rude, Monsieur Pierre!" And so saying, I burst into tears.

"In a moment he was on his knees by me, begging of me to forgive him. 'Oh! wretch, miserable wretch that I am,' he said, 'is it possible that I make your tears flow! But what a wretch I should have been indeed to have let you embrace me, mademoiselle! Surely no baseness would have been equal to that!'

"I never had seen, and I never have seen, any one look as he looked when he said this. Put if you can an expression of mingled worship and sorrow on the face of that Spanish knight before us, and imagine the countenance of Monsieur Pierre as he so addressed me. It was well for me that I was but a child, else such adoration must surely have turned my head. A few years later I could not think of it without retrospective emotion; but all I said to him then was a saucy taunting:

"Why did you kiss my foot, then? For you know you did."

"He turned crimson, and answered rather bitterly:

"Even a dog could do that."

"I felt silenced. I was ashamed to have reproached him with that act of grateful humility. I was ashamed of myself altogether, and wished Louise would come back. But she did not come back. Monsieur Pierre was silent, and I spoke no more. While he went on bandaging my foot, I looked at the bright glimpse which I saw through the open door of the summer-house. The trees were turning yellow, and wore all their autumnal beauty; but the grass was green as in spring, the fountain danced merrily in the sun, and the white statue beyond it, a fleet Atalanta stooping to pick up the golden fruit of the Hesperides, was to me as a promise of life and strength. How I remember that morning and the breeze that stirred the sere foliage of the elm-trees, and the low voice of the fountain, and a silent blackbird that hopped on the grass, and Monsieur Pierre's bowed head and fair hair as he stooped to secure the last bandage on my foot. Never more was I to see that sunlit garden; never more was I to visit that little white temple; never more was I to feel the touch of that kind and skilful hand. Providence denied that its work should be com-

pleted, and left me with that lameness which I shall carry to the grave.

"Louise had been gone about a quarter of an hour, when she at length came back to us. She looked horror-struck.

"Oh! Monsieur Pierre!" she cried, "the man they have been trying at the Palais de Justice is condemned, and must die: so says the gardener."

"He raised his head. Never shall I forget the horror in his eyes and his parted lips—never. I screamed with terror, but my voice had no power on him now; he sank back with a groan, and fainted. Louise was beside herself. She ran to the fountain, and came back with a cupful of water, which she sprinkled on his face. It revived him; but return to life only brought with it the fiercest despair. He dashed himself down on the stone floor, and uttered a prayer I have never forgotten. 'My God!' he prayed, 'let me die before that man—let me die first.'

"Monsieur Pierre, you must go," cried Louise. "Make haste and go, or I shall be ruined."

"But he did not go.

"You are one of God's angels," he said, turning to me, "and your prayers will be heard in heaven. Pray that I may die before that man."

"No, no!" I cried, bursting into tears; "I cannot pray that you may die."

"Well, then," he entreated, "pray that he may live."

"I was willing enough to do that, and I said so. He grew wonderfully calm, and rose, pale as death, but composed and grave. The change in him was so marked and sudden that I have often thought, since then, he must have received some inward certainty of the deliverance that lay before him. Louise hurried him away, let him out, and came back to me, all anxiety to secure my silence concerning what had passed. I promised to be mute, but I asked to know the cause of Monsieur Pierre's distress, and I was so pertinacious that she was obliged to satisfy me. The man whom they were going to execute on the very Place beneath our windows was Monsieur Pierre's brother!

"The last execution took place a year ago," said Louise, "and then we all went to the country for the day; but madame is ill now, and cannot be removed. I suppose we shall shut up the windows and stay in the garden."

"There is a deep attraction in the horrible. I shivered with terror, and yet I longed to see that frightful sight. I wondered what it was like, and when it would be; but Louise could not, or would not, give me any information on either head, and I was left to my imagination. Heaven knows the images with which it became peopled. They took so strong a hold of me, that never since those far days have I been able to read of, or hear of, an execution. I once attempted to read about one, and was seized with a shivering fit that lasted hours; another time, a gentleman having entered on such a narrative in my presence, I fainted. The reality is surely fearful; but I doubt if it can equal the pictures my fancy drew during the three days that followed the

scene in the garden. My aunt was dying, and I was left very much alone in my gloomy chamber. Marie never came near me, and Louise was always going down to gossip in the kitchen. It rained, so I could not be taken to the garden. I lay on a couch near one of the windows, reading, or looking out on the Place. The church looked gloomy in the rain; it seemed to me that the saints must be cold in their stone niches. I was tired of seeing the great pools of water in which the rain-drops fell, splash, splash, without ever ceasing. But that was not all. An imaginary scaffold was always before me. I saw the block, and the axe, and the criminal, and the hideous executioner; and so vivid was the vision, that when I closed my eyes I saw it still. It haunted me in my dreams, and on the third night it woke me.

"A strong red light from the Place entered my room through its three windows, fell on the polished oak floor, and rose to the ceiling. It was not the light of day. A dull sound of hammering broke the silence of the night, and I knew that those were not the sounds of daily life. 'Louise!' I called, 'Louise!' But Louise had left me. I was alone. I could walk a little now. Shivering with fear, but supported by a curiosity stronger than fear, I crept out of bed and reached the window. I opened it softly, and looked out. A pale mist almost hid the church from me; behind it, above a house which stood next it, I saw some grey streaks in the sky. Dawn was breaking, but the men who worked below had torches, and it was their glare that I had seen from my bed. The men were erecting the scaffold; I knew it at once, and I looked with eager eyes that vainly strove to pierce the darkness. Something black I saw, and shapes that looked like spectres in the red glow of the torches, but nothing more. I could hear, however, and I heard one of the men swearing at another who had taken his hammer.

"Do not swear," said a voice I knew. "You do not know when you may stand in God's presence."

"One of the men suddenly moved his torch. Its light fell on the face of the speaker, and I saw him standing on the scaffold: pale, grave, but composed, giving orders which the men obeyed. How did I know that Monsieur Pierre was not the criminal's brother? How did I know the frightful duty which brought him there, and would bring him there again and again, till death should release him? I cannot tell you how I knew it, but I knew it; my hair seemed to stand on end, my blood turned cold with horror. I uttered a frightful shriek, and fainted.

"When I recovered consciousness, I had been ill and delirious for a whole fortnight. My aunt was dead, and my father was sitting by me. I did not remember well, and my first words were:

"Where is Monsieur Pierre?"

"Monsieur Pierre is dead," answered my father, gravely. "He did not live to cure you, but you must remember him in your prayers. I have already caused masses to be said for the repose of his soul."

"Monsieur Pierre was dead. Heaven had

heard his prayer. An hour before that appointed for the execution, he was seized with so violent a fever, that he was incapable of performing his office, and he died before another executioner could be found to end the days of the miserable criminal. All this my father told me, very briefly but very plainly, and he did well; it relieved me of the horror with which I must otherwise have remembered that unhappy young man. Death is the great absolver. Death is the great deliverer. He has the keys of liberty, and unlocks its gates.

My father was not my aunt's heir; we left her house as soon as I was able to travel, and Monsieur Pierre's name was no more mentioned in my hearing. But I did not forget him. I prayed for him. I remembered him. I blessed him for the good he had done me and had not lived to finish. Years later, I succeeded in learning the whole of his sad story. I had it from a priest, who little guessed all that Monsieur Pierre's name recalled to me. He had known him from his childhood, and spoke of him with reverence and pity.

"It had pleased God," said the abbé, "to bestow on this young man, the son of an ignoble and blood-stained race, two of his choicest gifts: a noble heart and a handsome person. How did he come by them? He was unlike either of his parents, and, neither in mind nor in person, did any of his brothers or sisters resemble him. There is a tradition in his native city that, two hundred years ago, a gentleman of good and honourable parentage was driven, by a crime he had committed, to accept the post of common executioner, and that from him this young man was descended. I have often wondered whether the nobleness, the truth, the manly gifts, I saw in him, were derived from some remote ancestor—some Bayard of ancient chivalry, who lived fearless and died stainless. There are streams which hide in the earth, which flow in darkness for miles, which then come forth again in sweet and pure waters. Is it so with man? Do certain virtues and attributes lie dormant for generations, at last to reappear? Is this why the noblest stems often bear foul fruit, and why the fairest flowers are seen to blossom from evil weeds? God knows. It is a great mystery; but though you will scarcely believe me, madam, this young man was all I say: a Christian hero. He had been accustomed, from his youth upward, to contemplate the hard fate to which he was destined, and he made no effort to avoid it. He was poor, and burdened with his father's children by a second marriage. Society was closed against him, and escape by concealment was impossible to one of such integrity that he could not deceive, nor tell a lie. He was deeply religious, and resolved to stay where Providence had placed him. He tried to regard himself as the blameless instrument of human justice, innocent as the axe he was to wield; but though his was a nature of great strength, he overestimated its powers.

His father had been dead a year, when he was first called upon to exercise his office. He lived in such seclusion, that he did not even know that a criminal was under trial for his life, until he learned that sentence of death had been recorded against that criminal. It proved a double sentence. On the morning appointed for the execution, the unhappy young man was taken ill; and he died three days later, resigned, nay, happy."

"And now, my friend," said the countess, with a smile, "you know why I bought that Velasquez, and why I like it. The original of that portrait was a gentleman of noble birth and noble life, who fought bravely for his country, and died in her cause. His name is kept in her records, his bones rest in one of her Moorish cathedrals, and ancient banners, taken from her foes, hang over his marble effigy. To crown all, a great painter left this semblance of him. It has passed through famous collections, has been catalogued, described, and engraved, again and again. The whole world knows that pale and manly face, that look of incomparable dignity; but something which the world does not know, I do. I know that one who bore this Spanish soldier's likeness, also possessed his virtues. I know that he lived in infamy, and died in sorrow, and I know that he loved me as I have never since been loved. My husband was very fond of me, to be sure; but he did not adore me. When I became a young and childless widow, I had plenty of suitors; but adoration I never won again. There is nothing so rare as the pure, lofty, deep worship of one human being for another."

I protest, reader, that I had never disputed this proposition in the least. However, I let the dear countess have her way—the only wise plan with a woman—and I merely said:

"My dear madam, I cannot tell you how much I have been interested in this romantic episode of your youth." (I could not say less, you know, reader.) "But allow me to put a question to you: how came your parents to trust you to the skill of that same unhappy Monsieur Pierre?"

"Ah, to be sure! I forgot to tell you that. You must know that in those dark times there existed a strongly rooted belief in the surgical skill of an executioner. He was held to possess it 'in virtue of his office.' I am bound to say that some of those men were really skillful. Monsieur Pierre, though so young, was celebrated throughout all France, and deserved his fame. People flocked to him; but if he had given up his post, he would have been deserted, and he knew it. Superstition itself combined against him, and kept him chained to his hard destiny, until Death came and set the captive free."

#### MR. CHARLES DICKENS'S READINGS.

MR. CHARLES DICKENS will read in Manchester on Thursday evening April 26th; in Liverpool on Friday evening April 27th, and Saturday afternoon April 28th; and in London, at St. James's Hall, on Tuesday May 1st; and at the CRYSTAL PALACE on Wednesday the 2nd.

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